John Byrne, Chris Wozniak, James Hudnall

ARENA

MAGAZINE

No. 11
July, 1993
$3.50 U.S.
($4.55 Can.)

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July Releases

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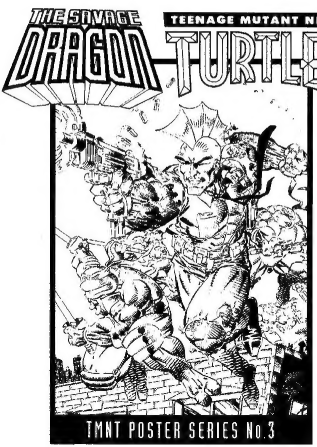
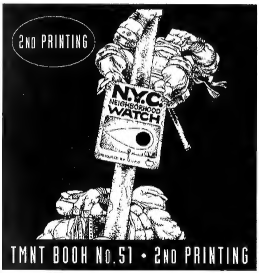


ERIC LARSEN & MICHAEL DOONEY



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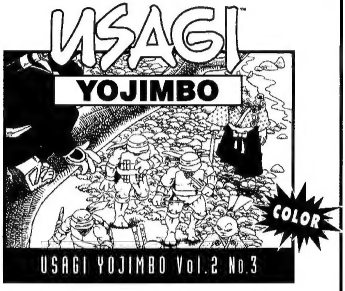

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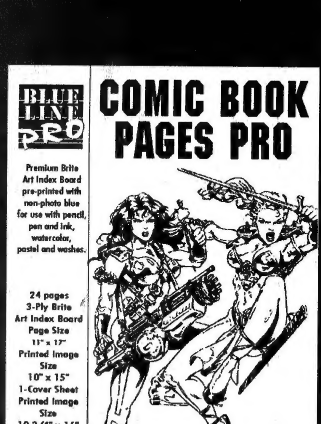
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COMIC BOOK PAGES PRO
Premium Brite Art Index Board pre-printed with non-photo blue for use with pencil, pen and ink, watercolor, pastel and washes.
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3-Ply Brite
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1-Cover Sheet
Printed Image Size
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(Street Fighter)
Dave Garica
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Chris Riley
Franchesco
(Scavengers)
Brad Gorby
(Parts Unknown)
Allen Freeman
(Morgana X)
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The ONES To Watch In July!

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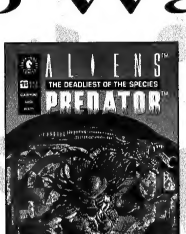


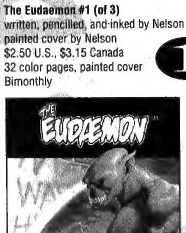
Aliens/Predator: The Deadliest of the Species #1 (of 12)
written by Christopher Claremont
pencilled by Jackson Guice
painted cover by John Bolton
$2.50 U.S., $3.15 Canada
32 color pages
Bimonthly

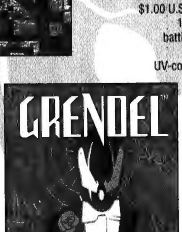
1

Golden City — Week 1: Rebel
written by Barbara Kesel
pencilled by Tim Hamilton
color cover by Jerry Ordway
$1.00 U.S., $1.25 Canada
16 color pages in battle-action format, with cardstock, UV-coated color cover
Weekly

The Eudaemon #1 (of 3)
written, pencilled, and inked by Nelson
painted cover by Nelson
$2.50 U.S., $3.15 Canada
32 color pages, painted cover
Bimonthly

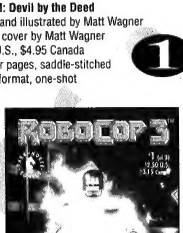
1





Grendel: Devil by the Deed
written and illustrated by Matt Wagner
painted cover by Matt Wagner
$3.95 U.S., $4.95 Canada
48 color pages, saddle-stitched deluxe format, one-shot

1



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RoboCop 3 #1 (of 3)
written by Steven Grant
pencilled by Hoang Nguyen
painted cover by Nelson
$2.50 U.S., $3.15 Canada
32 color pages, painted cover
Monthly

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THE WORLD'S GREATEST COMICS!™

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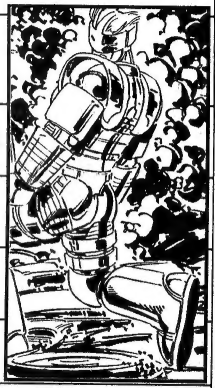

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Editorial

Okay, who let loose?

Heard that question before, have ya'? Well, it's never signified so much for me as it does now. The *Summer Bloodbath* is here, folks. It's big, bad and it's ugly.

Of course, it's a little exciting, too. There have never been this many companies with this many titles and this much quality in the history of comic books. Kind of reminds me of the Big Black and White Explosion that mushroomed in the mid '80s. A handful of publishers made it through -- namely Mirage and Malibu -- and some weathered the storm -- Warp and Aardvark-Vanaheim -- but many, oh so many, rolled up into a little tiny ball and evaporated into obscurity. Is this to be the argument in this case? Keith Giffen predicts that, "People (publishers) are going down and they're going down big." He explained to me that the industry is "a balloon that can contain only so much air before it pops. And this balloon is at its stretching point." Very well put.

Is this the Big Color Explosion of the early '90s? Yes. Without a doubt, it is. Consumer dollars are limited. The amount of readers out there are limited and the books are starting to outnumber the readers! If it keeps going like this there's going to be more people working in comics than buying them. The industry is going to expand this summer, and then it's going to implode.

In the midst of this *Bloodbath* we're going to see lots of really cool stuff. Let's start off with the momentous X-Men and Avengers anniversaries, the Image/ Valiant Deathmate, not to mention the incredible growth of the Image animal (what a beast!), Mirage is starting up in computerized color and the package they recently sent me looks like some excellent material, DC is going to draw out this Superman thing and this Batman Knightfall thing I'm sure, Dark Horse is introducing their Greatest World and Malibu has an Ultraverse to offer, Defiant's got a universe of "good guys" and Triumphant (those new guys) has a Collector's Universe (sequentially and serial numbered), Kitchen Sink bought Tundra and the "Bizman" is getting his own line of Atomeka titles to play with. Even the alternative alternates like Caliber, Chaos Comics and Lightning Comics are pulling in some impressive numbers.

The advice in my editorial in *AM#9* was to choose wisely. I said that "sometime soon when there's 375 publishers out there producing over 300,000 comic publications... that 376th publisher is going to be the one that breaks the monkey's back." This summer onslaught just may well be that monkey .

Be careful out there, and send your mom a flower for no reason. That would be nice.

Joe Martin
The Editor

Thrown To The Lions!

CORRESPONDENCE & ADVICE

Here it is again, another fun-filled edition of "Thrown to the Lions", your monthly correspondence column. This month we take a look at... a lot of letters, as usual! But, we're going to start off with the one that grabbed me the most. Onward and Tally-Ho!!

Dear "Thrown to the Lions",

I am sending several of these letters out to different sources of news so that someone can hear my plea. And here it is: DC COMICS, I BEG OF YOU NOT TO TAKE TOM AND MARY BIERBAUM OFF OF *LEGION OF SUPERHEROES*!! I have been an avid follower of this title and the loss of Keith Giffen (and Tinya Wazzo) affected me greatly, although on the pencilling end, Stuart Immonen is doing a wonderful job. If I am to lose Tom and Mary, the book will just not be the same! *LoSH* was one of DC's flagship titles. Over the years, since T&M began penning the book, the characters have taken a shape and form not seen since the days of Superboy. The characters are real. They bleed. They cry. And they die. That's the biggest part of it. They die. It's not one of those fake "Marvel deaths". When we lost Blokk in the first issue, we lost a true friend and we knew that the loss was permanent, that he wouldn't be back two issues later. Bringing about the "kid Legion" was one of the greatest strokes of genius in a long time. This gave older fans like myself a chance to relive part of their childhood while at the same time seeing what the characters are like as adults, with adult problems in adult situations. And to lose two gifted writers who can shape a universe in this way will be a true travesty to the future of DC's Universe.

T&M are two of the best dialoguers in *LoSH*. No, in Comics History! I would put them up against the likes of Neil Gaiman or Alan Moore any day of the week. T&M make me feel like the Legion are real people and not just comic characters. Just because a book may slightly differ in direction from what the "editors" want is no reason to just yank a title from the writer and destroy all that he or she has slowly been building. Since the destruction of Earth, T&M had developed a new, fresh direction! *LoSH* has always been an enjoyable title that I look forward to each and every month and I'm never disappointed.

Sadly, my ultimatum, and I'm certain that others feel this way (I know my friends do): *It is with a heavy heart that I say this, If T&M leave Legion, I'll be leaving Legion.* I know in comics nothing is permanent but please reconsider and keep Tom and Mary as the permanent writers. Without them the book will not be the same. I'll be losing more than a couple friends, I'll be losing Kono, I'll be losing Rokk.

Desperately,

Martin Haddix
Akron, OH
P.S. LLL!

Well said, Martin, Tom and Mary rule. DC, get it together, man. LLL! Oh, and, Martin... I love your first name.

Dear *Arena* Lions,

Thank you, thank you, thank you. I love your magazine. It has the most information about new comics than any other on the market. I really like the Industry News; it gives the inside stuff about comics. Joe (funny guy) Martin's interviews with the top notch creators of comics are outstanding. The Gordon/Ordway interview about *WildStar* was the best. While I'm at it, I might as well plug Dan (amateur) Souder's article in *Arena #8*. Dan and I are good friends so I thought I should say something good about the article. It was far-out! He should have his own column every issue. Something along the lines of Jerry Smith's "Comics Now".

"Getting Into the Business of Comics" is one of the things I look forward to reading in each issue of *Arena*. I plan on illustrating comics in the future, so this shows me what I have to look forward to. I'm only 17 years old so I still have a few years to perfect my artistic style. Until then I'll keep reading Lurene's column.

I have a few suggestions for you to think about. I heard that you wanted to expand your letter column. How about printing some fan art? Or maybe a special section for amateur art. Add 2 or 3 pages to *Arena* specifically for it. An amateur art section would make this magazine complete. You could count on me to send in a drawing every month.

Well, I think I've taken up enough of your time, so just keep up the excellent work and never ever do a hologram cover.

Your friendly neighbor,

Chris Riley
Florence, KY
P.S. I agree with you Dan, greasy chip fingers are hell on comics.

Hey, Chris, thank you, thank you, thank you! By the way, the fan art thing is a great suggestion. How about it, people?

Dear *Arena*,

I just wanted to drop you a quick note regarding your magazine. I've been enjoying your publication for the last five issues and want to compliment you on your progress. The format is very accessible and the new logo and gloss cover add professional touches. As well, I would like to applaud the diversity of coverage in your news section and interview subjects. Lurene Haines column/ articles are very interesting and it would be great to hear of any success stories resulting from the advice she gives.

This is not to say there are no faults. Some of the lead interviews could go into a bit more depth and be a little longer. My main quibble though is the use of the cards as an incentive/ gimmick. I am not a card

collector so the cards (for me) are really a waste. I don't know if the inclusion of the cards adds to the cost of the magazine but if it does I would rather see a lower price without the extras.

This being said, I would like to enter my suggestion for your Johnson/ Stroman *Tribe* "Name That Hero" contest. I think the name AIRSTRIKE sums up the character's combination of powers and attitude.

Thanks for your time.

Erwin Heinek
Regina, Saskatchewan
Canada

Thanks, Erwin! The cost of the cards to be included in Arena is so minimal that it wouldn't affect the $3.50 cover price. We were $3.75 at one time, obviously, but after seeing the initial breakdowns, the publisher and I agreed that going down a quarter wouldn't hurt in the slightest. We would like to go lower but those circulation numbers have to get on up there.

Also, you may not be a card collector so give them to a friend who is. You may call it an incentive/ gimmick, which it is, but it doesn't affect cost and it gives lots of readers who do like such things a little extra something. And it helps sales, too! That means more Arenas! Yeah!!

Dear Editor,

I have enclosed my latest comic book, some promotional material, and a press release for our upcoming full color comic, Factual Illusion. Please read the story. It is doing very well across the entire country, and I think it will get better by far!

I also wanted to thank you for printing the full page of art (in your Jan '93 issue), and for putting a panel on your Table of Contents page. I know it is a risk for a publisher to do that with a company that is not "tried and true", but it is refreshing that there are still publications like yours out there!

Thanks for your time, and I hope you enjoy our publication!

Dan DeBono
Blackmore Publishing
Floral City, FL

Thanks for the compliment, Dan, and no problem. Thanks for the book, too. We try to give everybody a fair shot, whether it be Marvel, Dark Horse or Blacmore. It's just a matter of receiving press releases, y'know.

Dear "Thrown to the Lions",

It has come to my attention that one comic book company, namely Marvel, has a brilliant strategy for these coming summer months. They intend to put over 70 titles on the market, most of which are inferior titles, and then sit back and watch the other companies fall by the wayside as they fight it out for their share of the market. At the end of which Marvel will come back hoping to be number one, cutting back down to their standard number of titles a month.

My question is this: If they plan to cancel half of the titles to begin with, why bring them out in the first place? We have one writer, Fabian Nicieza, who is writing six books a month and probably editing as many! I don't care how good of a writer you are, there's no way you can balance six storylines you're writing yourself while editing six more! No way in hell!! The quality of the books are going to suffer tremendously if this becomes a common practice with Marvel Comics.

It is my hope that Marvel will see the error of their ways before this ever begins and go for quality instead of quantity. But to hope such a thing I may as well be, excuse the candidness, "pissing in the wind." Take a few notes from DC, guys. Let's go for quality, like *Iron Fist* by J.M. DeMatteis and Jae Lee, and not two more *X-Men* books, which the market certainly doesn't need! I think you got the mutants covered. Why not just keep it where it's at? Start trying to build back what you once had – remember those pre-Image days? Of course, I know if you don't flood the industry you may be in danger of losing your number one spot in the industry – the giant may tumble. Money talks, bottom line, I guess.

Maybe it's time for the giant to take a fall. If it means getting back to the grand days of the Marvel Universe, then I'm for it. Uh-oh, wait a minute! Marvel is owned by stockholders now, instead of the talented men who actually built something starting in the early '60s. Too bad, huh?

Sincerely,

Ward LeRoc
Portland, OR

Man, Ward, I can understand where you're coming from. Stockholders are forcing Marvel to compromise quality in some aspects. There's lots of good stuff they're still doing, but there's a lot inferior work put out there by people who wouldn't have been given a second glance ten years ago. Very interesting.

Dear Arena,

You guys have made quite a comeback since issue five. You disappeared for a couple of months and then BOOM you've got a new format and logo! Now, you're able to get interviews with industry people that I've actually heard of.

The only problem I see so far is the price. Paying $3.75 for a 65-page magazine seems just a little steep. However, it is a nice change from the other magazines that cater to the frothing-at-the-mouth-fan-boy that buys anything with a nifty gimmick cover and pretty pictures.

The sections on how to break into the comic business have been very informative and should be collected into one publication. That would help out a great deal for those who have an interest in the business. Issue #9 was fantastic simply because of Joe Quesada. I've always liked his work since *The Ray* and didn't really know much about him

otherwise. The previews of upcoming comics is a nice touch for those who want an advance look at some top quality alternative comics. I was impressed by the *Paradigm* spread and also the *Morgana X* preview page. What do you know aobut them and when will they be released?

Well, I've taken too much of your time already so I'll close by saying that you have a reader for life.

William Volde
Buffalo, NY

William, as you may know by now if you picked up AM#10, we are back to $3.50, and back to stay. Hey, you even get 88 pages instead of 65! Actually it's 64, but who's counting? The page count is usually up in the air because it's impossible for us to predict how long an issue will run. Factors like interview length and article/column content make it really tough. Anyway, I'm glad you like the new logo. We do, too. I hope the quarter savings makes it worth it for you. Thanks, man.

Hey guys,

AM#9 was the best yet! Man, I love Joe Quesada's work and your interview by Dan DiDio was highly enjoyable. A word to Quesada: I hope you achieve your artist's dream to work with Miller and/ or Moore. You've worked with Peter David and that has to be great! That guy can write! I love what they're doing with *Hulk*, and no offense to Keown but Gary Frank is awesome (after you Joe)! One thing, Joe, if you do achieve your artist's dream you'd better dare not quit! You said you'd have nothing else to do, but I think there's plenty more stuff out there.

Also, I knew Daerick Gross had worked on *Vampire Lestat* and *Necroscope* but I had no idea he's working on a *Batman* project for DC. That sounds really cool and I'm impressed by the man's diligence. I attempted to fully paint a comic my sophomore year in college and I just didn't have the resolve to finish it. Keep it up, Daerick!

Anyway, Arena Magazine is my favorite read, hands down. When I pick up your mag, I feel like "one of the guys". You can read it straight through and it's fun. No criticisms here, just keep it out on time! Thanks, guys, for hearing me out.

Your friend,

Bart Reece
Cosmic Comics
Bay City, MI

Bart, I will send copies of this to Quesada and Gross to make certain they get your message. I'm sure they'll appreciate it. I know we do.

Thanks for the letters everybody and write more!

Next! It's Deathmate with Rob Liefeld and John Ostrander as they tell us about their involvement on the Image/Valiant crossover, as well as future stuff! Also, we'll chat with Neil Gaiman, Sky Comics, and more! Be there, or we're coming after ya'!!

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Writing: Address all submissions to Arena Magazine, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky, 41042. Please enclose a S.A.S.E. Submissions must be typed, double spaced. Keep a copy of your manuscript. Only send copies. Always put your name, complete address, and phone number on each page of article.

Art: Address all submissions to Arena Magazine, 264 Main Street, Florence, Kentucky, 41042. Send good copies of stats please. Put your name and address on the back of each piece of art. Always include an S.A.S.E. if you wish your materials returned.

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10th Anniversary of INTERVIEW!!

FIRST LOOK: X-MEN 2099!

Marvel unleashes the most eagerly anticipated new X-MEN title of all — millions of mutant fans want to know what uncanny and unknown *future* awaits the X-Men, and we're here to whet their appetite with an exclusive spotlight on this top-secret project!

After keeping this one under wraps and developing X-MEN: 2099 only in utmost secrecy, Marvel has agreed to lift the lid for a first look at what may well be the bombshell blockbuster of the year.

X-MEN: 2099.

It's big. It's bold. It's in this issue of INTERVIEW — a must-have mag for absolutely every Marvel mutant maniac!

DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT'S COMICS INTERVIEW

VALIANT/IMAGE CROSSO

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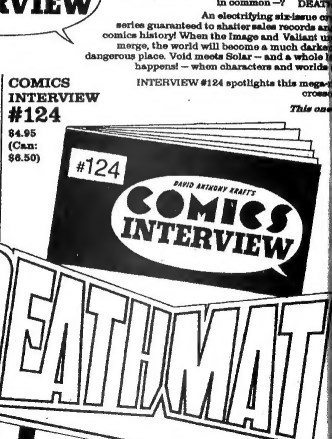

CEREBUS SPECIAL EDITION

Dave Sim has never been afraid to play comics' David to the Goliaths of the industry. From the great distributor controversy to the creators' bill or rights, Sim has spoken his mind.

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John Byrne:

Headed for the Future

Interview by Jerry Smith

John Byrne Facts

Date of Birth: July 6th, 1950

First Published Comics Work: "Do Not Disturb" Monster Times #13, 1971

Credits: Artist or writer or both on everything in the known universe at one time or another Except Dr. Strange

Arena Magazine: *You've had a subdued presence in the comic industry of late, is John Byrne's Next Men the only thing you're working on right now?*

John Byrne: For the most part, yeah. I decided with the industry being as... turbulant ... there's a good word ...as it is right now, it's better to draw back and look at it from afar rather than trying to compete with all the insanity going on right now.

AM: *What are your thoughts on the turbulence?*

Byrne: I'm a little concerned. Of course I've always been a bit of a

Portacio's Sunfire is from John's third issue as writer on ***Uncanny X-Men*** *#283.*

doomsayer, but the shape of the industry right now worries me quite a bit because I can't see how it's going to maintain itself. Right now Marvel and DC are making more money than they ever have in the history of the universe, but they're doing it by selling to a very tiny, tiny slice of a potential marketplace. They're packaging only the events that are aimed at speculators, and I wonder how long it will be before the speculators look at the forty, fifty, sixty, a thousand copies of last year's hot book they have in plastic bags in their basement and realize they are not worth the cover price.

AM: *I've thought that for about five years now, ever since Marvel started going crazy [with new product] in the summers. I keep wondering where it will end, and it never does.*

Byrne: We're looking at this summer to be some kind of indicator of how close the end of the universe is. With everybody in the known sky lauching a new superhero cosmos, I think this will be a really serious test of how deep the pockets are of the fans and the speculators.

AM: *Did you see the editorial cartoon in a recent Comics Buyer's Guide of the fan sitting down with a dumptruck of books [this summer's releases] about to descend on him?*

Byrne: Yes. That was very appropriate.

AM: *Let's get the "Question That Has To Be Asked" out of the way. What happened to John Byrne's return to the X-Men?*

Byrne: Well, the easiest way to do it would be by the numbers, I guess. Jim [Lee] and Whilce [Portacio] were getting later and later and later turning in the artwork for me to type over, because I wasn't coming up with the stories, I was just the hired typist,

Jae Lee's pencil art from ***Namor*** *#26.*

basically, to come up with the words. We reached the point where the last issue I officially worked on, Jim Lee faxed me artwork on Friday and Saturday so that I could script it on Saturday and Sunday and fax the script to Tom Orzechowski so that he could letter it because the book had to leave the office finished on Wednesday.

AM: *Does that kind of crunch happen often?*

Byrne: It happened a lot with those guys. I finally threw the closest I get to a hissy-fit and I called up Bob [Harris, editor of X-Men] and said, "This is nuts. The writer normally gets a month to do his job, I would like to have at least two weeks." And Bob said, "Okay, we'll take care of it," and the next thing I heard was Scott Lobdell was writing the X-Men.

AM: *Without consulting you?*

Byrne: Yes, and that was all I knew, the last I heard of it.

AM: *Moving on to Namor, who's idea was it to make the book so dark, or is that just Jae Lee's style?*

Byrne: That's just Jae's style. He wanted to go savage again, and I said well, fine. The "big business man" which was the the idea that had intrigued me and brought me onto the book in the first place obviously "didn't have legs" as they say ... didn't have wings on his heels. Jay wanted to go dark and his style certainly suited that. Certainly it suits Namor.

AM: *I totally agree. I never really thought of the character as a dark character, but with the long hair it just really worked. What did the fans think of it, what did the editor think of it?*

Byrne: The editor loved it, but what the fans thought of it I don't really know because I kind of ran out of stories. I was planning on leaving around issue thirty-six, and for various mechanical reasons I ended up leaving on thirty-four. It was the week of the San Diego Con and the plot didn't get plotted when it was supposed to and panic set in, so they got somebody else to plot it and I said, well, it was only two issues from when I was planning on leaving anyway, I figured that might as well be it. I don't really know where the sales are. I know they went up slightly, but I don't know that they went up all that much. I think they were doing–and again I'm not sure on this–but I think it was doing about a hundred thousand the last time I looked.

AM: *It just seems like whenever anyone does anything as drastically different as Jae Lee's style, a lot of people don't like it. I even saw some negative letters in Namor about it, and since I don't*

think Marvel prints that many negative letters, they must have had a ton for any to see print.

Byrne: Either that or they didn't get much mail at all that month. Actually I quite like Jae's stuff, although he seems to be forgetting to draw backgrounds more and more. [In an ultra-serious voice] That's the style these days I guess. Us old-timers who insist on drawing buildings ...

***AM:** And tables, and chairs ... While researching some of your previous interviews for this one, I noticed your attitudes about the comic field have changed drastically over the years. What is your current take on the industry? What are the big companies doing right or wrong in your opinion?*

Byrne: Well, God forbid that I should ever agree with Jim Shooter, but he did say at one point that he felt that Marvel was turning into the Franklin Mint. I think that is the single biggest thing any of the companies, whether it be Marvel or DC or Image or whoever, are doing wrong right now, which is to create collectables, which is a contradiction-in-terms. If anyone even thinks about it for two minutes, ninety-nine percent of the comic books which are valuable or truly collectables were not considered so when they first came out. Nobody bagged a thousand copies of the first issue of Action Comics back in 1938. People didn't think that way, that's one of the reasons it's rare and valuable today. Overall, there are thematic things which annoy me; the darkening of existing characters. I have no real problem with grim and gritty, I just think that they've grim and grittied everything now. I thought that the darkening of Congorilla was about the stupidest ... I was talking to Mike Mignola just today, and we were trying to figure out what's next, and I said, you know, they haven't darkened Rex the Wonder Dog yet.

***AM:** No, I think they have, as a matter of fact.*

Byrne: Have they really?

***AM:** No, just kidding.*

Byrne: Well, it wouldn't surprise me. Rex could come back as a rabid hell hound ...

***AM:** A Cujo kind of thing. Speaking of Shooter, have you seen any promotional stuff for his new company, Defiant?*

Byrne: Oh, I've seen quite a bit. In fact, there's a whole consortium of us who are firing off letters to CBG even as we speak. Our response to the--to put it politely--the "fantasies" that are coming out of Defiant right now.

***AM:** Such as ...*

Byrne: Well, Jim Shooter's view of himself and his place in the industry.

***AM:** Yes, I read his biography*

and wondered the same thing. So, when is the John Byrne Image book coming out?

Byrne: Well ... [Laughter] You know, I used to say that I would do a book for Image when there were two companies left and one of them was run by Shooter. Now I am much more realistic, and I have said that I will do a book for Image the year after the year they ship eighty percent of their titles on time. I think I'm still safe.

AM: *[Laughter] I was at the panel in Atlanta last year [at Atlanta's Dragon Con] when you and Todd McFarlane had a disagreement about the attributes of Image Comics. What exactly happened there?*

Byrne: I have a problem with Image because they strike me as extraordinarily unprofessional, just in as much as they don't get the stuff out. Really, if I were to boil it down, my problem is less with the guys at Image as it is with the people who are buying the stuff ... or ordering the stuff, because it is very hard to physically own an Image comic. I have a friend up in Canada who works in computer programming, and he refers to stuff that they wish they had as "vaporware." I think Image has figured out how to translate "vaporware" into comics.

AM: *"Vapor Comics."*

Byrne: "Vapor Comics." [Laughter] So we won't actually sell you a comic, we'll just sell you a number.

AM: *Right. I have a comics review column in* ***Arena****, and somebody wrote in recently saying I had an "anti-Image chip on my shoulder." I don't think that's the case. I evaluate every book on its own merits, and I do like some Image books. It just seems that overall their product ... the art is always great, but some of their*

storytelling needs work.

Byrne: Well, I would debate whether the art was always great.

AM: *Maybe not always ... I was thinking of Jim Lee's stuff. There was recent talk of you writing screenplays. Is that going to happen?*

Byrne: No, nothing really definite. That probably grew out of my having been approached what must have been close to two years ago now to do a treatment for this new *Fantastic Four* movie. In fact, what they really wanted was a *Silver Surfer* movie; I thought, oh god, that again? So I did, in fact, write them a treatment for both, one for a *Fantastic Four* movie and one for a *Silver Surfer* movie. And in the great tradition of Hollywood, they threw vast amounts of money at me and are not using either.

AM: *Have you seen anything about the new Fantastic Four movie?*

Byrne: I've seen bits and pieces of it, and what I've seen I just dread. [Laughter]

AM: *Have you seen the publicity stills? The Thing looks great, everybody else ...*

Byrne: Wellllll ...

AM: *For the money limitations they're obviously going to have, it looks okay.*

Byrne: They've intrepeted the Thing the way they always do, the vinyl model is the same, which is, they make his plates rounded, so he ends up looking like Cobblestone Man. To me, the plates have always been flat. He should look more like a dried-up riverbed than a cobble street.

AM: *Do you think the Thing on that Saturday Night Live skit in the late '70s was better?*

Byrne: That I don't remember.

AM: *They did a great Thing costume.*

Byrne: I've never actually seen the Thing done three-dimensionally, except by me. I built a model of the character just to see what he would look like. I made a Thing the way Kirby--and I--drew him.

AM: *A sculpture?*

Byrne: Yeah, a sculpture. I think the casting [of the FF movie] is interesting. I'm surprised by Alex Hyde-White, I think he makes a pretty good Reed Richards. Johnny looks pretty good. Sue--I've never found anybody who was Sue to me. They've got a generic blonde, who may or may not be great in it. I was surprised to see them doing quote "my" close quote costumes, the blue and white ones. I wish they had paid a little closer attention to the layout of the costumes, so that everyone wasn't wearing the "4s" on their tummies.

AM: *I thought the exact same thing when I saw it. How much trouble would it have been to put the "4" insignia on their chests? It looks really strange.*

Byrne: They've misinterpeted the wide collars. Instead of making the collar wide, like out to the shoulders and not very deep, they've made it narrow and very deep. The result is, in one picture I saw, Sue's belt is actually cutting off the bottom of the "4." It was kind of, "Hmmm. That's not it."

AM: *Did you notice that Victor Von Doom is now "Vincent" Von Doom?*

Byrne: Oh, is he?

AM: *Yes. I wonder what's wrong with the name "Victor." It seems like Hollywood always has to make some subtle change just to*

cause at one point I was debating giving the Mole Man a name, which he had never had, and the first name I came up with was "Victor." Then I remembered Doctor Doom's first name was "Victor," and I changed it to "Vincent." Maybe that's still floating in the ozone. [Laughs] "Victors" must always be called "Vincents."

AM: *At least his name wasn't "Bruce" and they changed it to "David."*

Byrne: Oh god. Well, they've got to mess with something. Look at Captain America.

AM: *I haven't seen it.*

Byrne: I finally saw it on cable. [Laughs sarcastically]

AM: *Is it worth it just for the laugh value?*

Byrne: It's not worth it for the laugh value, it's worth it for the cringe value.

AM: *I was cringing when I saw clips of it a few years ago. Lots of cringe value there.*

Byrne: As one of the highly placed editors at Marvel, who would probably prefer me not to put his name to the quote, remarked, "This is the movie that will really make you long for the good old days of the Reb Brown Captain America."

AM: *[Laughter] He was kidding, right?*

Byrne: Probably not, no.

AM: *Any new John Byrne novels planned?*

Byrne: Lots are planned, nothing is close enough to finished to call it real yet. I've got dozens, it seems, in various states, and my editor keeps chasing me for something else because apparently Whipping Boy did very well. But I don't have anything for sure.

AM: *Will it be a horror book?*

Byrne: It'll probably be horror, although I'm not exactly sure how I fell into that genre. But, there I

although I'm not exactly sure how I fell into that genre. But, there I am and there I'll probably stay. Once I become Stephen King, I'll be able to write other stuff.

AM: *What comics are you currently reading, if any?*

Byrne: Not a lot of anything. The only Marvel book I was following with any interest was *Excalibur*. I guess that won't last now, Alan Davis is leaving. I don't read anything at DC. I glance at some of the Dark Horse stuff, which is almost a compulsive thing, because I'm at that company now. Even though none of it is ever going to effect me.

AM: *No continuity problems, then?*

Byrne: I feel like I have to keep an eye on it. That little bit of paranoia that makes me go, "Is Paul Chadwick going to do something in *Concrete* that will screw up Next Men?" Well, no, John that won't happen now.

AM: *Nobody is going to call up and demand that you stick Robocop in the middle of a* ***Next Men*** *story.*

Byrne: No. We have talked about the possibility of doing a *Next Men/Predator* thing, but it's so vague and so far off it's barely worth mentioning.

AM: *Moving on to the* ***Next Men****, your work on the book is harder in tone and more sophisticated*

than anything that you've done before. Is this due to the frustration of being held back at other companies because of the comics code?

Byrne: No. It's just the way I wanted to tell the story. I decided to be more adult. I decided to treat it like one of my novels, rather than a conventional comic book. I've never found the code particularly binding, actually. It's more of a challange than a restriction.

AM: *I think Stan Lee made that point one time.*

Byrne: Yes, I remember Dick Giordano pointing out one time that Stan and Jack had done their best work under one of the most restrictive periods of the code. That really underlined it for me. Dick said that to me before I started writing. When I did start to write I said, "Well that's cool, the code is not an obstacle, it's a challenge." I managed to create a homosexual superhero, a homosexual captain of police for Metropolis ...

AM: *A very understated homosexual captain of police.*

Byrne: One has to within the code. And I've done child abuse stories and drug stories and all kinds of stuff within the code, it's just putting the right spin on it.

AM: *I love comics that start with famous quotes, or quotes that reflect the tone of the story. Do you have a book of quotes for* ***Next Men****, or are you just extremely well-read?*

Byrne: Yes I do, the ever-popular Bartlett's. I am fairly well-read, but not enough that I can pluck quotes out of the air.

AM: *Mike Baron used to do the same thing in Nexus. I used to read those and think, "How well-read do you have to be to have all these great quotes to back up your plot?"*

Byrne: If it's a Shakespearian

where that one is."

AM: *You're a Shakespeare fan?*

Byrne: Yes, or Edward DeVere, as I like to think of him.

AM: *Where did that come from, Edward DeVere?*

Byrne: Edward DeVere is one of the main contenders to have written plays attributed to Shakespeare. I'm a supporter of his claim.

AM: *Getting back to writing, howabout a prose story in Next Men?*

Byrne: In *Next Men* ... well, that would be an interesting place to put it.

AM: *I mean featuring the Next Men characters.*

Byrne: Oh I see. I hadn't really thought about that.

AM: *You've done work in both mediums. I'd like to see what you would do with those characters in a prose story.*

Byrne: That would be interesting, I hadn't thought about that. I'll have to give some consideration to that.

AM: *Will we ever see Nathan, Jasmine, Bethany, Jack and Danny fighting a "supervillain" side-by-side, in costume, like a regular supergroup?*

Byrne: Not in costume, but side-by-side against a supervillain is coming up fairly soon. The character has already appeared. In the issue that just came out, I have set in motion the coming of their first almost-traditional supervillain. "Supervillain" in a very traditional sense, because of the origin and where the character comes from, even though I'm not even mentioning gender here. That will be coming in a fairly substantial arc. At present, it's about one or one and a half arcs away from where I am now, so maybe about six and a half issues from now. And I'm working on issue eighteen now.

AM: How far in advance have you plotted?

Byrne: I've plotted up through about issue thirty-six. Very specifically up through about issue twenty-five, and a little bit vaguer up through thirty-six. I have a very, very, very vague general kind of idea of where I'm going to go up to about issue fifty.

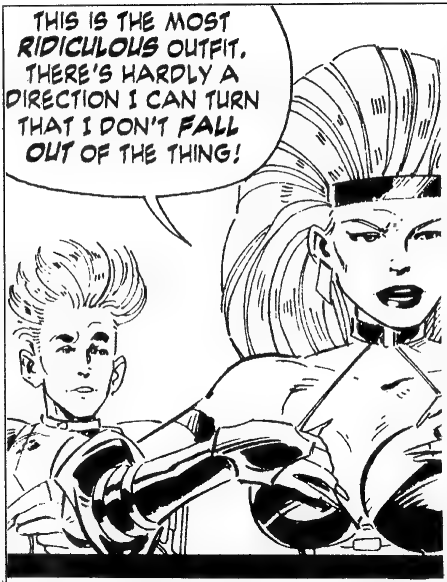
AM: What are your general plans for the Next Men characters? Do you see an ending to the story?

Byrne: There is an ending that I have in mind. Whether or not I will ever implement it, I don't know. If the sales drop off to nothing or if I lose interest or what... I do have an ending I will stick in somewhere. I'd like to think it will go on for a fairly long time before I tie it up. In general it is going to go through a lot of weird stuff. There is a fairly substantial time travel arc. [Sardonically] That's a surprise for a John Byrne book. I am going to do time travel like I've never done it before, which is to bounce around the different ages. I have a character coming in who's working title is the Warlover. This is somebody who's come back from the dim-and-distant future looking for fun. He's bouncing around through all kinds of different historical periods where there was blood, death, gore and that kind of stuff.

AM: Is the research driving you crazy?

Byrne: No, the research will be fairly minimal. I'll do a kind of Hollywood approach to it. There will be just enough research in it that anyone who is aware of the actual period that I drop them into won't be too offended. They'll be able to say, "Well, he put three buttons on this jacket that really should only have had two, but at least he got the town's name right."

AM: What's your relationship



least he got the town's name right."

AM: What's your relationship with Dark Horse?

Byrne: Very good really. I send them the stuff and they print it, and then they give me money.

AM: [Laughter] Pretty simple huh?

Byrne: Pretty straightforward. I've chided them for what I perceive as perhaps a lack of advertising for the book, but that's really the only problem I've ever had with them.

AM: Have they had any feedback on your stories, as far as, "Hey, this doesn't look right," or, "Could you change this?"

Byrne: No. Nobody can tell me anything. [Laughs] Barbara Kesel, who is my editor, is really just the poor lady who makes sure it gets out on time. She occasionaly makes very helpful suggestions. She mentioned to me that she thought that one character was perhaps a bit too good to be true. So I said, "That's true", and threw in some additional stuff. Even Matt Webb, the colorist, made a fairly brilliant suggestion! Actually he make a brilliant guess that was totally wrong, but it was so brilliant I said, "Y'know ... I think I'm gonna use that."

AM: A quick Superman question: Have you read any of the books that deal with Superman's death, and what do you think of splitting the character up into four different characters? Is it good, bad, just a marketing idea ...

Byrne: Everything is just a marketing idea, really. I really don't know what the heck they're up to over there. I suppose, given what they've done and the success of the death of Superman, they're gonna want to stretch it out as long as they possibly can until they bring the real one back. I know they got fairly substantial sales, or at least orders, on the alleged return--was it *Adventures [of Superman] #500* or something. I wonder if the sell-through will be the same as before. I know a lot of "civilians" bought the death of Superman, and I wonder if they'll be as interested in the return of Superman, especially if it's like, four guys.

*AM: In a recent issue of **Next Men**, you mentioned you might be drawing something for Marvel soon?*

Byrne: Yes, I have plans if I can ever sit down with Howard Mackie, we're talking about doing a Spider-Man/Ghost Rider/Man-Thing story. Howard was mentioning to me one time how Ghost Rider's power is to generate fear, and I said well, gosh, this guy should meet Man-Thing then, because whatever knows fear burns at the Man-Thing's touch. And we throw in Spider-Man just because I like drawing Spider-Man.

AM: So that's a definite then?

Byrne: I wouldn't even call it a definite. We definitely want to do it. The only other thing that's definitely on the horizon is Wendi Pini and I are going to be plotting an issue of *Elfquest* together, which she is then going to draw and I'm going to ink. So that should be different.

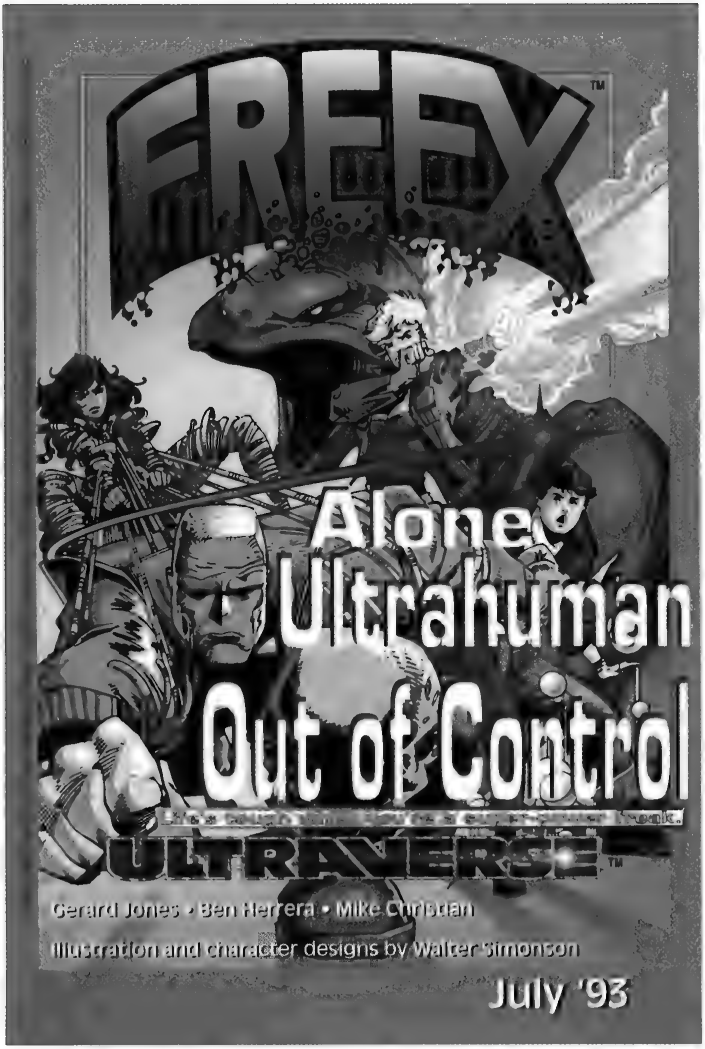
*AM: Yes, I did notice your work in the **Elfquest New Blood** series. Have you followed **Elfquest** from the beginning?*

Byrne: Yes, I have. It's really good stuff, I wish more people would read it, but I think they think, "Ohh, elves. Icky."

AM: Cute little elves.

Byrne: Cute little elves. Well, these elves aren't "cute." They're rough and tumble.

SK
COMICS


FREEX™
Alone
Ultrahuman
Out of Control
ULTRAVERSE™
Gerard Jones • Ben Herrera • Mike Christian
Illustration and character designs by Walter Simonson
July '93

Comic News FLASH

Shadowhawk Gold In Chicago

A special, limited gold logo edition of *Shadowhawk II*, #2 will be available exclusively at the Chicago Comicon from creator and artist Jim Valentino. This special edition will feature a first day of issue certificate of authenticity, be limited to only 1,000 copies, and will be signed by both Valentino and by series inker and letterer Chance Wolf.

This issue features the long awaited revelation of Image's most mysterious hero's identity as he faces the racist murderer, Hawk's Shadow. "This may get a bit controversial, but we believe when viewed in the context of the story, what we're doing is perfectly valid," quoted Jim, although he did not elaborate.

The issue also features a three page center fold out, high glossy paper and a silver foil logo all for only $1.95. Also, a gold logo version of the same book will be packed at a ratio of 1 to every 100 silver books at Ronald's Printing, to insure that all retailers who order 100 books have an opportunity to own what will certainly become a highly sought after collectible.

All New, All Different... Batman!

The "Knightfall" storyline reaches its thunderous climax in *Batman #500*, a 64-page landmark issue offered in two editions. The Collector's Edition features a die-cut overcover on a foil-enhanced cover, showing the transformation of the old Batman to the new, pencilled by Joe Quesada. The Newsstand Edition features a different cover by Kelley Jones.

Featuring Batman's most dramatic change in direction in half a century, *Batman #500* debuts the Dark Knight's shocking new costume as Batman sets out for his final confrontation with the drug-enhanced criminal mastermind Bane. But *this* Batman *isn't* Bruce Wayne!

The new Dark Knight is Jean Paul Valley, the avenging angel known as Azrael, who has been programmed since birth to serve as an assassin. Having assumed the identity of Batman after the original's grievous injuries at Bane's hands in *Batman #497*, Azrael quickly learns that the old rules no longer apply. If Azrael is to be the Batman, it has to be on *his* own terms.

Writer Doug Moench unfolds this character-driven story at a break-neck pace while dropping compelling hints at the diverse forces shaping this new Batman. Penciller Jim Aparo concludes his stint in the tense first half of *Batman #500* with inker Terry Austin. Then artist Mike (*Darkhawk*) Manley takes over for the explosive second half, beginning his run as regular penciller and inker. The next chapter in this highly cohesive, epic Batman saga begins here!

But Bruce Wayne is by no means out of the picture as, while recovering, he and Alfred go undercover to solve the mystery of Robin's kidnapped father. These next major story developments in the Batman titles occur simultaneously under the umbrella title "Knightquest."

Batman #500 ships in August.

Comic News

Blackbird News

Learning to Fly

Fifteen years ago in the small Texas town of London, a winged boy was born. *Wings: Learning to Fly* is the story of that winged boy, Daniel, and his ascent into manhood. In this issue we experience Daniel's teen years including his first sexual encounter, and we meet Neal Harris, a sleazy reporter from Houston with an interest in exploiting the young winged boy. This issue of *Wings*, the first from Blackbird, is a special encore presentation of the sold out first issue originally published by MU Press. This edition has been completely re-lettered and has five new pages of art.

In addition this issue features a six page preview of issue #2 by acclaimed newcomer Brian (*Frederick and Eloise*) Biggs. Order this special re-presentation and find out what all the fuss is about, before it, too, is sold out.

Wings: Learning to Fly #1 is written by Richard Klaw and illustrated by Robert Bostick and sports a cover painting by Morgan. The preview of issue #2 is written by Richard Klaw and illustrated by Brian Biggs. The book is 30 pages of story and art (including the preview) and is printed on high grade 20 lb. white interior stock, with a 70 lb. gloss enamel cover. It retails for $2.50 US.

Caliber News

Nightlinger Emerges

There's a new dark avenger in comics: *Nightlinger*.

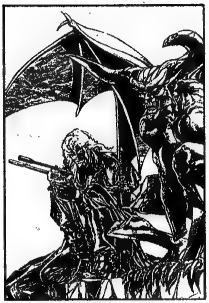
"If you love Batman, you're gonna love Feril Nightlinger," series creator and writer Steven Jones promises. "Come to think of it, though, if you love Robin Hood and Remo Williams, you're gonna love *Nightlinger*, too."

Escape artist. World-famous stage magician. An international *bel-esprit* and lady's man. Feril Nightlinger, the main character, is also a masked mystery man who anonymously aids people with supernatural problems.

Assisting Nightlinger on his adventures is his able and beautiful assistant Mike Segretto, a former Chicago policewoman and Illinois all-state prep athlete.

"*Nightlinger* is a horror-adventure series, but most importantly, it is a fun series that readers of all ages can enjoy," Caliber publisher Gary Reed said. "People who buy this comic are going to have a good time reading it."

Nightlinger's covers will be drawn by S. Clarke Hawbaker, artist on Marvel's *Nomad*. Hawbaker, a fan favorite, will contribute a poster of Mike Segretto in each issue.



Nightlinger's regular artist and letterer is Aldin Baroza, whose work has been featured in Slave Labor's *Tales of the Heart* and *Hero Sandwich*. Baroza also collaborated with Jones on Caliber's recent adaptation of H.P. Lovecraft's *Music of Erich Zann*.

"Aldin is a super artist and versatile letterer," Jones said. "I feel lucky that he wanted to work on *Nightlinger*, and we've really enjoyed working together on this series.

"I feel just as fortunate that Clarke Hawbaker was available to contribute his covers and posters. Clarke will also be contributing full-length stories to

Nightlinger as soon as his schedule permits."

Nightlinger #1 will debut in July under Caliber's Gauntlet banner and will be part of the new Gauntlet Universe, which already features the popular superhero team *U.N.-Force*.

He Is A Sinner

Coming in July from Caliber Press will be a new hard hitting series, *Joe Sinn*. Written by Scott Finley and illustrated by Brooks Hagan, *Joe Sinn* is scheduled to run four issues and will feature the title character pulled into a cyberpunkish world of crime, desolation, and violence.

"Essentially," said Publisher Gary Reed, "Joe Sinn is a character who was betrayed by his own government and flees to the city that he hopes he can blend into. Unfortunately for him, his considerable skills are noticed and he's pulled into a roller coaster ride of revenge and retribution." Sinn is aided by his special electrical and chemical augmentor suit but has a stiff price to pay for its use as the enhancers play havoc with his nervous system.

The creative team of Finley and Hagan is probably best known for their stunning work on the first four issues of the critically acclaimed "War of the Worlds" series. Although the creators have full time occupations outside of the industry, Reed states that this series should showcase their considerable talents to an even greater audience. "It would be great if these two could devote more time to comic work," said Reed, "but we're happy to be able to present this series." Reed, who has published cult favorites such as *Baker Street, Crow, Fringe, Grafix Muzik*, and *Airwaves* feels that *Joe Sinn* will fit right in with that premier line of Caliber titles and should find a receptive audience. Caliber also currently publishes *Realm* and *Deadworld*, two other fan favorites with a devoted following.

Joe Sinn is scheduled to debut in early July and will ship bimonthly. "We already have most of the second issue in and the third is well into production," said Reed. "We wanted to schedule this book to insure that it would ship as scheduled. Brooks devotes a great amount of time into the artwork, and it really shows. It's a little reminiscent of Frank Miller's style but in no way is it derivative."

Caliber Press expects *Joe Sinn* to do well in even today's crowded market as it will appeal to an audience seeking out mature, story driven material. A second series is already in development.

Dark Horse News

Golden City: Rebel

All of the following Comics' Greatest World titles are written by Dark Horse veteran Barbara Kesel. *Rebel* features the art team of Tim Hamilton and Gary Martin. Strong, quick, agile, and flashy, Rebel's accustomed to admiration -- and to the orderliness of the privileged placed he shares with his twin and superhero alter ego in Golden City. But order is about to erupt into unimaginable chaos and bone-crushing violence! Warmaker's on the scene, and Rebel has to face him all alone and prove, once and for all, whether he's a true hero or just another pretty face.

Mecha

Mecha offers the creative talents of penciller Chuck Wojtkiewicz and inker John Lowe. He's huge, he's powerful, and he's encased in alien technology! His name is Mecha, he's a newcomer to Golden City, and

this is his big chance to show Grace he can come out on top, still fighting even against the likes of Warmaker. Brute strength against brute strength, the two are almost equally matched -- like locomotives in a head-on collision. Warmaker has a few surprises; but then Mecha surprises himself...Maybe his armor has capabilities even he hasn't dreamed of!

Titan

With the kind of raw power that the ancients used to whisper about in myths, it's no wonder they call him Titan. But he's no myth, and he's in for the fight of his life! Titan: as hard as concrete, almost as fast as the missiles Warmaker can launch out of his own skin, and a lot smarter than the average grunt. But is he smart enough to realize he may have underestimated his opponent? *Titan* features art by Brian Apthorp and Jimmy Palmiotti with a cover by Walt Simonson!

Catalyst

Catalyst is graced with a terrific George Perez cover, and the art team consists of Jan Duursema, Damon Willis, and Rick Magyar. Warmaker is out of control, and the better part of Grace's Golden City lies in ruins because of him. It's time for the amazing Grace to step in with Catalyst, her hand-picked, super-powered agents of change, to set things right. There are tough questions facing Grace, and she's prepared with tough answers. But the most nagging question may never be answered: Did Grace engineer the Warmaker dilemma just so she could step in and fix it?

DC News

Sandman Jams

Neil Gaiman and Kevin Nowlan guide readers through an eight-page tour of the Dream King's shadowy realm in the first-ever *Vertigo Jam* -- a New Format DC one-shot scheduled for a July 6th shipping date. Also along for the ride (in self-contained stories by a variety of Vertigo creative teams): John Constantine; Shade, the Changing Man; Animal Man; and the Doom Patrol (in a story with art by Eric [*Blue Witch of Oz*] Shanower).

Crossover Extravaganza

When a group of ancient -- and extremely arrogant -- deities begins tinkering with the fabric of reality, it's up to the Green Lantern Corps, L.E.G.I.O.N., and the Darkstars to stop them (or die trying). Thus begins *Trinity* -- DC's latest, and possibly greatest, outer-space crossover saga, featuring the cosmically supercharged talents of Gerard Jones, Michael Jan Friedman, Barry Kitson, Travis Charest, and many others.

DC Universe: Trinity # 1 kicks off the action, which continues in June-shipping issues of *L.E.G.I.O.N. '93*, *Green Lantern*, and *Darkstars*.

Extremist Pushes the Edge

The Extremist is neither a person nor a state of mind. The Extremist is a state of life. *The Extremist* is an erotic thriller that explores sexual themes and contains strong subject matter.

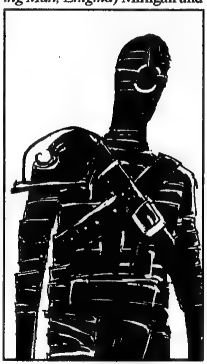
The day Judy Tanner's life fell apart was the day she started living. One night two years ago, as Judy and her husband, Jack,

were leaving a San Francisco sushi bar, someone stepped out of the shadows, plunged a knife into Jack's abdomen and carved a deep X there. A week after the funeral, Judy knew only one thing for certain: she had never truly known the man she had married.

In a squalid studio apartment Jack had rented without her knowledge, Judy found hundreds of books and photographs describing a world she never dreamed existed -- a world of sexual obsessions, of pleasure and pain, of leather and lacerations -- depraved passions sanctioned by a secret organization called The Order. She found cassette tapes labeled *The Diary of the Extremist*, about a man who tracked down sex criminals and, often as not, killed them. The voice on the tapes was Jack's.

Judy also found a costume. Once it may have belonged to the man she had called her husband, but within a year the costume belonged to Judy. And Judy belonged to the world of The Extremist.

The Vertigo line continues to explore bold new territory as writer Peter (*Shade the Changing Man, Enigma*) Milligan and artist Ted (*Eclipso, Eddy Current, Metropol*) McKeever conjure a hidden world at the edge of secret desires and private obsessions.



Legends of the Clown Prince

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #50 celebrates its giant 50th issue with a special story and a spectacular foil-embossed Brian Bolland cover. For the first time, the Batman's archenemy, The Joker, assumes a central position in *Legends of the Dark Knight*, as a story set in the early days of the Dark Knight's career reveals the underside of his first encounter with the Clown Prince of Crime.

Writer Dennis O'Neil and artist Bret Blevins weave a tale of murder and mayhem, chronicling the Joker's first quest for supremacy in Gotham's underworld, as Batman contends for the first time with the villain's lethal poison gas. Also in this issue: a special pinup section featuring such fan favorite artists as Howard Chaykin, Jim Lee, Mark Schultz, and Mike Zeck.

Showing Talons in Hawkman

Hawkman takes flight with a foil-embossed cover on the first issue of his new ongoing series. With a new costume, new weapons, and new powers, this Hawkman is a bird of prey in the truest sense: a hard-edged urban hero whose extreme measures won't long escape the notice of the Justice League.

John Ostrander, writer of *The Spectre* and *Batman: Gotham Nights*, with penciller Jan (*Hawkworld, The Hulk*) Duursema and inker Rick (*The Question, Aliens*) Maygar, deliver a *Hawkman* series with shocking revelations and new twists, and some of the most dynamic super-hero art to be found anywhere. Plus, in this new series, Hawkman is fully integrated into the DC Universe, with Green Lantern Hal Jordan guest-starring in the first story arc.

The Fanboy's Bane

Fanboys and speculators, watch out! The Main Man is hitting the convention circuit in search of another copy of *Superman #75*, the polybagged edition with the little armband, because he laughed so hard reading his first copy that he tore it in half! And that's exactly what he'll do to any fanboy who tries to gouge him!

It's called the *Lobo Convention Special* and it's the most fun you'll have all summer. Imagine the satisfaction of seeing Lobo coping with registration lines, cleaning his teeth with hologram trading cards, and using polybags as only he can.

This masterpiece of mindless mayhem is plotted and laid out by Keith Giffen and scripted by Alan (*Batman: Shadow of the Bat*) Grant with art by Kevin (*Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight*) O'Neill.

It's the *Lobo Convention Special.* Buy lots. Lobo might come looking for a copy and you don't want to be out.

Iguana News

Iguana Comics Debuts – Logo Sought

Rip Off Press, long-time publisher of adult and underground titles, has announced a new all ages imprint: Iguana Comics. Iguana titles will include PG-rated horror, action/adventure, science fiction, humor, and costumed crimefighters -- maybe even the odd mutant or superhero.

The publisher is holding a contest to find a good logo for the new comics line. Entries should be in black and white, should feature the Iguana Comics name and be legible when reduced to a 1" square size. The winning logo design will be adopted as Iguana Comics' official logo, to appear on all of its future publications. The contest winner will have his or her photo and biographical profile featured in a forthcoming Iguana publication. Entries should be mailed to:

Iguana Comics
P.O. Box 4686
Auburn, CA 95604 USA

and must be postmarked no later than midnight, July 31st, 1993. All entries become the property of Iguana Comics.

Blood Seekers

Award-winning artist/writer Sterling Clark, whose work has appeared in the *Night Stalkers* novels and will soon be seen in the pages of *Spawn*, crafts an electrifying tale of mystery, magic and violent death as he introduces us to Omar Lennyx -- a C.I.A. agent whose missions involve the occult and the supernatural. Inked by Rebel Studios' Jeff Austin, the razor-sharp artwork rivals Austin's efforts in *Faust, Night Vision*, and *Raw Media Magazine*.

The story, complete in one bonus-sized issue, follows Lennyx as he is called in by the government to solve a series of gruesome slayings. Key political figures have been murdered, their bodies drained of blood. He links the killings to Lilian, a beautiful and mysterious immigrant from Britain. When her motivations and unholy appetite become clear, a battle to the death ensues -- from which there can be only one survivor!

Rounding out this Number One issue are a 6-page story featuring Clark's costumed crimefighter *The Renegade*, co-plotted by Rebel Studios' Tim Vigil, and pinups by Jeff (*Amazing Spider-Man, Wonderman*) Johnson and Darick (*Justice League Europe, The New Warriors, Wolverine*) Robertson.

The Omar Lennyx Files #1: Blood Seekers will be published jointly under the imprints of Sterling Clark's Studio S and Iguana Comics, a new all-ages imprint from long-time underground publisher Rip Off Press.

Image News

Deathmate Black

All is not as it should be. The Earth has become a colder and darker place. Jacob Marlowe is no longer a successful financier but one of the most powerful

rulers of the Western Hemisphere with Wildcore as his enforcers. Yet, it is Jacob who realizes that things are awry and he must decide if Earth's greatest heroes will be sent to stop the Deathmate before the Universe ceases to exist! Featuring Warblade, Ripclaw, Turok, and X-O Manowar, this issue is sure to be red (or black) hot!

Deathmate Red

Prophet enters into a deadly alliance with Chapel and Gilad the Eternal Warrior as they form a strike force to oppose Youngblood and their newest member -- Bloodshot! Guest-starring a virtual who's who of characters from both the Image and Valiant universes! Not to be missed!

Origin in Brigade #0

Bridging the gap between *Youngblood #0* and the first issue of last year's *Brigade* mini-series, *Brigade #0* chronicles the sequence of events leading up to the formation of the Brigade team, including Battlestone's first confrontation with Youngblood and Shaft! Guest-starring Emp, of Jim Lee's *WildC.A.T.S.*

Kitchen Sink News

Women Cartoonists Celebrated

For nearly 100 years, women have been a force in cartooning in America. For 70 of those years, they have been an unseen, ignored, or lightly-regarded force. It is only recently that women cartoonists are gaining recognition in a traditionally male-dominated field.

A new book coming in June not only recognizes the cartoonists of today but records and celebrates those who came before. Researched and written by pioneer underground cartoonist Trina Robbins, *A Century of Women Cartoonists* is an all-new look at the creative progress of women in cartooning from the early years of this century to the present.

A Century of Women Cartoonists will be published in trade paperback this June by Kitchen Sink Press. In 176 pages, Robbins provides a comprehensive look at dozens of cartoonists, some well known, a number lost to history -- until now. The richly-illustrated book retails for $16.95 and is for all ages.

From Grace Drayton, who created the Campbell Kids at the turn of the century, and Rose O'Neill, creator of *The Kewpies*, to such contemporary artists as Alison Bechdel, Melinda Gebbie, Mary Fleener, Carol Lay, Lee Marrs, Lynda Barry, Julie Doucet, Roberta Gregory and Robbins herself, *A Century of Women Cartoonists* is a comprehensive and fascinating celebration of women who made cartooning their lives.

Written in a lively, opinionated, accessible style, seven chapters arrange the work by era, with each chapter lavishly illustrated. The operative word in the book is cartoonist. Robbins has confined her subject to women who actually drew comics; that is, a continuity of panels that relate a narrative. The book begins with "The Queens of Cute," which covers the careers of, among many others, O'Neill, Drayton, and Nell Brinkley, who exercised a profound influence over future generations of women cartoonists. It is followed by "The Pursuit of Flappiness," "Depression Babies and Babes," "Blond Bombers and Girl Commandoes," "Tradition," "Chicks," and "Women, Womyn, and Wimmen."

A Century of Women Cartoonists is going to make a splash both inside and outside the comics market. Kitchen Sink will be aggressively marketing this book in media and venues where women will see and hear about it. They feel *A Century of Women Cartoonists* is not only an important book in the history of comics, but fills a gap in women's history. Kitchen Sink's marketing will state the book is available in comics shops -- so don't be caught short. This is your opportunity to open your shop to a previously lightly-regarded or downright ignored audience in comics-women.

The Crow Collected

James O'Barr's popular, yet volatile comic book series, *The Crow*, has been compiled for the first time in the special edition graphic masterwork, *The Crow Collected*, due to be released in August.

Since its debut in 1989, *The Crow* has kept legions of faithful readers enthralled with its saga of tragedy and violent retribution, partly-based on events from O'Barr's own life. Now, nearly 200 pages of previously released material have been compiled into one graphic novel, along with two additional chapters, "Inertia" and "Atmosphere", not found the *The Crow* three-volume series published by Tundra. Also featured is a new full-color cover by O'Barr, an eight-page color section of the original Caliber and Tundra covers, and several previously unpublished pieces of *The Crow* artwork.

Most notably, O'Barr has dedicated *The Crow Collected* to the

memory of actor Brandon Lee. On March 31 of this year, while in the final days of filming for his starring role in *The Crow* movie adaptation, Lee died of injuries sustained from a prop gun misfire. "Brandon loved the comic," said O'Barr after returning from a visit to the studio, "and this terribly tragic accident is even sadder because this would have been a breakthrough for him. He was perfect in the role..."

"*The Crow* is a project with some of the most dedicated fans I have ever encountered," said Kitchen Sink Publisher Denis Kitchen. "In honor of Brandon's memory, we have, with this collection, created something special."

Lightning News

The Debut of Lightning

Now is the time for Lightning Comics to enter the comic book arena! The industry is poised and waiting for a new company to enter and Lightning Comics is that company.

Why is Lightning Comics different?

• Lightning Comics has committed never to print more than 250,000 copies of any of its first printings. This will ensure that all of their titles are in great demand. It's been proven over and over – if everyone has the same book, how can it be worth anything at all?

• Lightning will never reprint any issue until two years after the first date of printing. If a consumer misses their opportunity to buy a first printing while it is on the shelf of their comic shop, they're either going to have to pay more later or wait two years to get a second chance.

• Like the industry giants, Lightning Comics owns all creative rights to all characters appearing in their books. This will allow for the easy and rapid flow of their characters into action figures, video games, cartoons, etc.

• All Lightning talent is contractually committed to working exclusively with Lightning Comics. This will detour any other comic company from trying to steal their talent (which has become commonplace in recent years and has virtually destroyed some companies).

• Lightning talent will soon be regarded as the best in the business. They are truly amazing!

• Unique origins. All Lightning superheroes will have an origin that is unique and original. This will make Lightning characters three-dimensional and the readers (ages vary from the very young to the very wise) will begin to feel that they are a part of the stories!

• Marketing smarts! Lightning Comics is a young company filled with many ambitious people. They claim they will be doing things that no one has ever thought of before!

Bloodfire Catches Fire

Since making his comic book debut at the Motor City Comic Convention, March 27 and 28, the superhero Bloodfire has caught as much, if not more, media attention as DC Comic's Death of Superman. This new superhero from Lightning Comics promises to be one of the most popular ever!

Bloodfire is a new kind of superhero who brings home a critically important message to young comic book readers: AIDS awareness.

Like his predecessors in comic book history, Bloodfire uses his brains, brawn, and bravery to beat back the forces of evil. The *Bloodfire* comic book (unlimited monthly series) also will show the negative societal attitudes people suffering from AIDS have to face – even those who contracted the virus through no fault of their own, like Bloodfire.

HIV-positive after a blood transfusion, macho marine Brian Reace is close to death, unaware a mad military doctor intentionally infected him with the AIDS virus as a first step toward creat-

ing a super soldier. Injected with an enhancement drug by the same doctor, Reace later becomes -- *Bloodfire* -- an AIDS infected comic book superhero with a message.

"AIDS is the tragedy of our generation. I wanted kids to learn through my comic book," said Bloodfire's creator Joe Zyskowski.

People across the nation -- even internationally, seem to like the idea of learning about how someone emotionally deals with AIDS though a superhero comic book.

The Bloodfire story has been covered by CNN, The Fox News Network, ABC, CBS, US News & World Report, USA Today, Entertainment Weekly, The Navy Times, The Detroit News and Free Press, and more. The story is scheduled to air on Entertainment Tonight sometime soon.

Internationally, Bloodfire has been the topic of numerous radio talk shows from Belfast, Ireland to Sidney, Australia -- even in Switzerland. German radio and the CBC are scheduled to air the story anytime.

Malibu News

Street Fighter Crossover

All heck breaks loose when Ferret, fresh off the pages of his own series, guest stars in *Street Fighter #3*! Ken's disappearance in *Street Fighter #2* has all the Street Fighters shaken, so when the ambitious Ferret challenges the huge E. Honda to a battle after meeting him on a plane Honda jumps at the idea!

The Protector's own Ferret thinks that the big guy sitting next to him on the plane will be a good punching bag to help him regain his strength, after being poisoned by Toxin in *Ferret #1*. Writer Len Strazewski said, "When Ferret hears the news of the passing of one of the Street Fighters, he realizes there may be an opening for a new American Street Fighter. He gives consideration to trying to join the competition."

When Ferret sees E. Honda out of his bulky suit, he realizes that the suit was the only useless weight on the very large sumo master. Honda uses Ferret as training to prepare himself mentally to seek and destroy those who killed the honored Ken. "Ferret knows that these guys are tough," said Strazewski, "but he didn't know that he was sitting next to one of the most well-known and powerful Street Fighters in the world. This may be one of the most violent and yet strangest battles that Ferret has ever had!"

Protectors Universe editor Roland Mann said, "Ferret appearing in *Street Fighter #3* is a direct tie-in to current *Ferret* storylines." Ferret fans will be pleased to know that the *Ferret* mini-series has been extended into a regular series, but will probably be disappointed to discover, as Mann said, "that Ferret gets his butt kicked by Honda."

A new female Street Fighter is also introduced in issue #3! "Nida is the first Filipino Street Fighter," Strazewski said. "She is currently tending to Sheng Long in Okinawa." Readers will also learn more about Sheng Long, the mentor of Ryu and Ken. More new Street Fighters will be introduced as they learn about the defeat of Ken and the vendetta that Ryu will be swearing against Sagat and his boss, M. Bison.

Keep your eyes peeled for *Street Fighter #3*, written by Len Strazewski and illustrated by Don Hillsman and Jeff Whiting, coming in July from Malibu Comics!

Jones and the FreeX

Not all ultrahumans enjoy their enhanced abilities. Five teenage victims of an experiment gone mad may consider their ultrapowers a curse. They join together to help one another deal with their powers, and call themselves Freex, the new Ultraverse title from Malibu Comics.

Freex, written by Gerard Jones and illustrated by Ben Herrera and Mike Christian, is the story of how these five adolescents learn to deal with their powers that are, for the most part, new to them. "Their powers were dormant for most of their childhood," Jones explained. "The experiment affected all of them in different ways, but when they find and meet each other, they discover that together they can learn to deal with their powers."

Michael Rafani, also known as

Plug, has the ability to infiltrate electronic and computer systems. He discovers that a mysterious organization has been searching for the kids affected by this mysterious experiment -- and they are close to finding them. "He tells the group what he knows, and sees potential friends in them," said Jones. "Together, they learn to control and use their powers to their advantage." The five make an abandoned building in San Francisco their home. As they discover that they're being targeted by people who want to catch them and use them, they have to learn to fight back. "That's when they start to use the powers that their freakishness brings," said Jones.

Other Freex include Lewis Phillips, a shape-shifter who goes by the name of Anything. "He's the charismatic center of the group," Jones said. Valerie Sharp is called Pressure. She has the ability to explode a napalm-like steam out of her body and burn things. Jones said, "She's the reluctant member of the group. She's sticking with them because she doesn't see many alternatives for survival." Sweetface is Angela Salazar, a girl covered with goopy, worm-like tendrils. "She discovers she can use them to grab things," said Jones. "Unlike Lewis, Valerie and Michael, she can't look physically normal." The one member of the group who was physically deformed before puberty is Ray Golic, who goes by the name of Boom Boy. "He grew up being big, blocky, and kind of monstrous," said Jones. "His head looks like the statues on Easter Island." Jones called Ray Golic "the big, strong guy that every super-hero team seems to need."

Though different in abilities and appearances, the Freex find comfort in each others' company. They protect each other, work with each other to use their ultra-powers to their advantage and give each other the comfort of a family. "I think *Freex* is a unique blend of super-hero action with emotional issues," said Jones. "The kind of adventures they'll have is uniquely strong."

Freex #1 will be out in July from the ultra-unique Malibu Comics!

Ultraverse Mini-Series

The Ultraverse is once again breaking new ground in the comics industry! In the fall of '93, Malibu Films' *Reel Comics* will begin production of the first ever comic book mini-series which culminates in a live-action videotape for its final chapter! The mini-series/video combination will focus on the Ultraverse, Malibu's interconnected super-hero universe. *Reel Comics* is a full comic book adventure in a half-hour live action format; the first video created by comics professionals for comic book fans.

The 4-issue mini-series and climactic fifth issue video conclusion will be solicited as a normal comic, and will be sold through comic shops and mail-order houses. "We'll be doing some very special promotions," said Malibu President Scott Rosenberg. "But for now, we've decided to keep secret the names of the characters that will be in the series." It's not a secret that the characters will be leaping out of the new Ultraverse line of comics!

The comic book side of "Project Ultra", as it has come to be known around the industry, will be edited by Editor-In-Chief Chris Ulm. The cutting-edge video conclusion will be directed by Darren Doane. Doane has shot a wide range of clips, including music videos by *Brotherhood Creed* and *Kyuss*, a film called *Godmoney*, and Malibu Films' *Hardcase* short, *Making of Hardcase* and *Ultra-Conference* videos.

"Once again, Malibu is creating a tradition of industry firsts. *Project Ultra* is the first collectible limited edition video," Doane said. "It's not just a gimmick, it's

a collectible product with a solid story attached to it. Comic book fans have never seen anything like this before!" With writers and artists on the Ultraverse team like Norm Breyfogle, Mike Barr, James Hudnall, Steve Gerber, Darick Robertson, James Robinson, Steve Englehart, Jeff Johnson, Len Strazewski, Gerard Jones, David Ammerman, James Callahan, Hoang Nguyen and more, *Project Ultra* has got to be good!

Ulm said, "Being intimately involved with all creative aspects of this multi-media project is fantastic! *Project Ultra* is just one more Ultraverse concept which will stand the industry on its head." Ulm added that the founding Ultraverse writers will be involved in the project to ensure the continuity of the characters when they make the transition from comic book to film.

The Ultraverse is a separate, stand-alone super-hero universe. "The Ultraverse is all new," Ulm said. "It builds on Malibu's years of publishing experience, and represents a giant leap forward. With the Ultraverse, we're taking a fresh approach to comics, storytelling, and even the business of comics!"

Project Ultra is just another fantastic first from the company that brought fans the first comic with a pop-up cover (*The Mighty Magnor #1*), the first comic with a force beam hole (*Protectors#5*) and the first completely die-cut comic (*Ferret #1*, coming in June). Editor Ulm said, "We have a history of taking it one step further with each new project. In the last year, our fans have seen us grow and improve at an astounding rate! The visibility of the *Reel Comics* will be very high, and they deliver the goods -- that's a refreshing change for the fans."

The Ultraverse was formed during a four day retreat in Scottsdale, Arizona in October of '92. Malibu Films was formed in March of '93 shortly after Doane was hired to turn James Hudnall's *Hardcase* into a live-action film short. Everyone involved with the Ultraverse was so impressed with the finished product, Malibu decided to bring in Doane, a long-time comic book fan to form Malibu Films.

"As long as I can remember," Doane said, "I've wanted to work in either comic books or movies. With the Ultraverse, I get to combine them both. It is truly the dream of a lifetime."

Ulm said, "With the addition of Darren and the film division team to the creative staff at Malibu, we are now capable of combining the larger-than-life appeal of comic books with the immediacy of film to produce a new experience for the audience."

Further announcements concerning *Reel Comics* and *Project Ultra* are expected this summer.

Marvel News

New Frontier Line

Marvel UK has certainly come into its own this past year, with the success of *Death's Head II*, *Wild Thing*, and *Super Soldiers*. The special visions of some of Britain's most talented creators, however, didn't quite fit into the Marvel Universe, but were too good not to publish. Now, to accommodate those spectacular visions, Marvel UK introduces a new imprint, Frontier, starting with four new titles this month!

Bloodseed, written by Paul Neary with pencils by fan-fave Liam Sharp, is a 4-issue limited series guaranteed to thrill (and shock!) lovers of classic sword and sorcery sagas. The book charts the journey of a ruthless hero through a savage land populated with every type of deviant monster imaginable! Bloodseed houses a genetic message in his body, and his only impulse is to deliver it. Plenty of blood is shed in completing his mission! All four issues of *Bloodseed* hit the shelves with a cover enhanced with a stunning gold ink background.

Children of the Voyager, a 4-issue limited series, is the story of a lonely immortal who wanders the Earth, leaving human replicas at each major crossroad of his experiences. He reabsorbs the replicas' knowledge at the moment of their deaths, hoping desperately to learn something that will release him from his Earthly prison. But one of his "children" refuses to return, taking with him the Voyager's key to freedom! This haunting tale is written by

Nick Abadzis with evocative art by Paul Johnson. *Children of the Voyager* debuts with a fully-painted cover, with an embossed figure and glow-in-the-dark detail!

Dances With Demons, also a 4-issue limited series, is concerned with the battle between good and evil. Written by Simon Jowett with arresting pencils by Charlie Adlard, this is the story of James Owl, a student who inherits the ancient powers of his American Indian ancestors. When Owl is tormented by hideous, violent nightmares, he sees what will soon become reality! *Dances With Demons* premieres with a foil-embossed cover.

July's final Frontier title is *Immortalis*, a disturbing 4-issue limited series written by Nick Vince, whose name in Britain is synonymous with horror. *Immortalis* follows Mortigan Goth's journey to recover his lost soul. Along the way, he encounters other immortals who are destroyed one by one! With a ghostly spirit guide at his side, Goth must track down this escalating threat! Readers will want to check out the artwork Mark (*Mister Miracle*) Buckingham has produced for this series: it is absolutely spine-tingling! *Immortalis* debuts with foil-stamped cover similar to the one on *Spider-Man 2099 #1*!

Razorline From Clive Barker

Roll out the red carpet and let the trumpets flourish! Marvel introduces a whole new super hero universe this month in the cutting-edge Razorline! Four new Comic Code-approved super hero books premiere, each master-minded by writer/director/producer Clive Barker. And, to launch this imprint properly, each premiere issue will feature a prismatic foil cover! The Razorline collection, *Hyperkind, Ectokid, Hokum & Hex*, and *Saint Sinner*, features a variety of prolific authors and artists such as James Robinson, Paris Cullins, and Max Douglas. Combining innovative creators, intriguing plots, and beautifully detailed artwork, the Razorline books will attract readers of all comic book genres. Their characters inhabit a whole new universe, separate from the Marvel Universe, and will eventually interact with one another in crossovers.

The Razorline stories concern themselves with ordinary people whose worlds suddenly become extraordinary; places where adventures range from gritty to supernatural, from comic to tragic. A bold departure from the horror for which Clive Barker is famous, this super hero line will appeal to his old fans and to a whole new audience. Each issue is truly a treasure comic book fans won't want to miss! Rack the four Razorline titles together to tell customers that the debut of this long-awaited imprint is a momentous event. You'll get sales off to a good start!

Stock up on *Razorline: The First Cut*, a special preview we're offering this month. At seventy-five cents, this 32-page comic features a 5-page story for each of the Razorline titles, a cover gallery, interviews with Clive Barker, and more -- all without ads!

X-Anniversary Continues

The X-Men celebrate thirty years of madness, mayhem, and protecting the planet in *Uncanny X-Men #304* this month!

Yes, this is the 30th Anniversary issue, and it's a beauty! Remember the outrageous wrap-around cover and state-of-the-art hologram from *X-Factor #92*? Well, the 64-page *Uncanny X-Men #304* will feature a wrap-around cover, as well, plus a terrific hologram of the Master of Magnetism himself, Magneto!

Written by Scott Lobdell, *Uncanny X-Men #304* finds members of the X-Men, X-Force, X-Factor, and Excalibur together to bury a good friend. At their lowest point, Magneto returns

and one of their own turns against them! Readers cannot miss this issue! Penciled by the incomparable John Romita Jr., *Uncanny X-Men #304* will be treasured for a lifetime.

Keeping the party jumping is the glossy 48-page *X-Men Anniversary Magazine*! This *Marvel Age* special focuses on the world of the mutants past, present, and future and includes an in-depth look at the making of the *X-Men/Avengers* crossover. It also features new personal memories by Stan Lee, Roy Thomas, Len Wein, and Chris Claremont, along with profiles of the current creative teams. Readers will thrill to read the "where are they now" tidbits about favorite creators of the past! Also included is insider information on what viewers can look forward to in the second season Fox-TV's *X-Men* cartoon. The *X-Men Anniversary Magazine* will feature a beautiful cover, designed to interlock with September's *Avengers Anniversary Magazine*, which will include even more information on the exciting *X-Men/Avengers* crossover!

Ghost Rider Annual

Ghost Rider's blazing trail through fandom continues to scorch up the sales charts! Polybagged with an exclusive "rookie" trading card, *Ghost Rider Annual #1* introduces an all new deadly villain, Night Terror. Sure to be a "pain in the neck", this vampire will stop at nothing to get what he wants, even if it means going through Ghost Rider to get it. Written by regular *Ghost Rider* scribe Howard Mackie with art by *Death: The High Cost of Living*'s Chris Bachalo and Mark Buckingham, this issue is an all-out suspense/action thriller that will enthrall even long-time *Ghost Riders* fans; includes a blazin' cover by Bachalo.

Marvel Hero Caps

You've probably heard about those collectible Hawaiian milk caps that have taken the comics industry by storm. Now, you can play this modern day version of marbles or tiddley winks with Marvel Hero Caps! Each Hero Cap set is die-cut on a standard comic-sized cardboard sheet, which is illustrated with nine Marvel stars and shrinkwrapped. Character and story information is provided on the back of the board. To entice collectors, one of each ten sets will include a bonus chase cap -- a foil-stamped Hero Cap! The following caps will ship in June and July, so Marvel just had to get 'em on an Update pronto! Face it True Believers, you're gonna flip for 'em! By the way, print runs of Marvel Hero Caps are limited! Note: Discount information is tentative pending confirmation from Marvel.

Mirage News

The Green Gang

This month's big news is that the Turtles will be teaming up with the new green hero on the block, Erik Larsen's Savage Dragon, for a "no holds barred" summer crossover knockout! The characters will meet for the first time in Image's *Savage Dragon #2*, written and drawn by Larsen, on sale in June. A little later in the year, the TMNT and the Dragon will team up once again in a crossover special published by Mirage and written and drawn by Michael Dooney.

The crossover idea came about during a phone conversation between Dooney and Larsen. "Erik and I have known each other for ages (check out *Gizmo #1* p. 9 for proof!) and we've talked about doing 'something' together for quite a while," says Dooney. "I'm sure that if it wasn't for the fact

that he ran off and became a superstar, we would have gotten together a lot sooner! I'm really excited that we are going to be doing this project together. The Mirage book will have a Larsen/Dooney cover and I'll be writing and penciling the story. Fingers crossed, if time and schedules allow, Erik will be inking the Dragon! For me, that would be the icing on the cake."

To celebrate the occasion, the third in Mirage's ongoing poster series will feature the cover art from the TMNT/Dragon crossover, by Larsen and Dooney. Following close on the heels of the very successful Todd McFarlane poster, this one will be hot!

New Next Imprint

August is an exciting month for Mirage Publishing. Not only will it see the release of the concluding issue of "City at War" and the fifth installment of the *Plastron Cafe* series, but it will also be the month that we premiere our three newest comics under the Next imprint.

What's Next? Three new titles will currently fall under the Next label. Each is a creator-owned book which shares in a common universe, although each story is independent from the others in Next. *Xenotech* by Michael Dooney is a high-tech, high impact superhero adventure, while *Stupid Heroes* is a Kirby-esque tale about superheroes who have been mysteriously afflicted by a rare disease which causes mental decay, and *Bioneers* is a superhero adventure with the flavor of a science-fiction film. Each issue comes with a special "Top Secret" cover and two trading cards bound into the spine. Gold cover editions are also available for orders of 50 and more and signed gold covered editions are available for every 75 copies ordered.

Part of the brand new world of Next comics, *Xenotech* is high tech, high impact, superhero adventure all the way!

It's been discovered that, on certain worlds throughout the universe, interdimensional barriers have been breached providing an access route across time and space. When these rifts open, anything can come through the gateway, and unfortunately what comes through is usually very nasty! On Earth, the strikeforce known as Xenotech has been established as our first line of defense. Equipped with high-tech weapons and battle suits of alien design that endow them with super-human abilities, this team is all that stands between us and a mysterious and hostile universe!

In addition to the full color cover, this issue also has an additional "Top Secret" file cover. And bound inside are two Next trading cards along with a redemption coupon for special limited edition Next cards not available any other way!

Genetic recombination experiments with human and animal tissue is illegal. However, eight years ago the U.S. Government quietly sent out a request for proposals for just such experiments. Finally there were two secret sanctions made. Here in the present, suspicious news-people are investigating one of these "Black Programs". They will soon get a bigger scoop than they had hoped for! Here begins the adventures of Team Dragonfighters -- A Special Operations team created as an Emergency Rescue and Extraordinary threat countermeasures force. Artificial super-humans! Fighting robots! High tech hardware! Gear up for big

adventure! The Bioneers aren't going to be a secret much longer!

In addition to the full color cover, this issue also has an additional "Top Secret" file cover. And bound inside are two Next trading cards along with a redemption coupon for special limited edition Next cards not available any other way!

The first of a new series about super-powered beings, some who have been afflicted with a rare disorder called Dementia Dominus, *Stupid Heroes #1* introduces super-powered Scott Poundstone as he engages in a wild brawl with a supercrook and his mayhem machine. SWAC trooper Alana Richardson beta-test advanced stupidhero-wrangling gear. Craig Murphy, the fiery superhero known as Cinder, starts to lose control. And what is the project called "Tarbaby"?

In addition to the full color cover, this issue also has an additional "Top Secret" file cover. And bound inside are two Next trading cards along with a redemption coupon for special limited edition Next cards not available any other way!

Sky Comics News

Sky Touring Dates

Sky Comics has unleashed the dates to their summer tour, vowing to do at least one major show every month this summer. Here is a schedule:

June 11-13
Great Eastern [New York, NY]
June 13
CCC7 [Cincinnati, OH]
July 3-4
Chicago Comicon
July 16-18
Atlanta Comics Expo
Aug. 14-15
Cin. Comic & Card Show
Aug 19-22
Gen Con [Milwaukee, WI]

From Turtles To Dust

Rick McCollum has done a variety of comic work but his most notable to date were some issues of *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Now Rick has brought his pet project to Sky Comics in the form of *Ashley Dust*.

Ashley is what one would call a Necroborg. Built from cyborg parts with the aid of her lover, Simon Bismarck, Ashley's sorcerous abilities permits her to commune with the dead. In the pages of *Ashley Dust* you'll meet such notables as Robert E. Howard, H.P. Lovecraft and Virgonix the Druid as well as face the machinations of the one and only (or is that *TWO* and only?) Evil Einstein! Through processes of reincarnation and transcending the borders of life and death, Ashley is in for a wild ride. Dinosaurs, dead writers and souls at unrest abound in *Ashley Dust*!

Sky(Zero)Comics

Next month, *Arena Magazine* #12 will premiere the release of Sky Comics' new comic book line featuring their core characters with a special Ashcan Edition inserted in each issue. This Ashcan Edition will premiere *Seeker* by Joe Martin and Deon Nuckols, *Blood & Roses* by Bob Hickey and Brad Gorby, *Tempered Steele* by Dwayne Haddix, Steve Redinger and Bill Nichols, *Dead Kid* by Tom and Mary Bierbaum, *Morgana X* by Allen Freeman and Quinton Hoover and *Ashley Dust* by Rick McCollum. Beginning in mid to late fall of '93, theses characters will be receiving their own titles under the Sky Comics banner in color!

"Sky Zero", as they're calling the special Ashcan, will be 28 pages of story with one continuing element running throughout as the good guys and girls struggle against their adversaries and an unknown mystery element. You'll have to read it to believe it! Just be here next month and you will! The cover will be blue with a foil enhanced logo. Additional copies will be available at conventions this summer (see the Sky Comics tour schedule on this page) but each will have different colored covers. A special "Ivory" cover will be available at the Cincinnati convention on August 13-15!

Triumphant News

Overview of The Collector's Universe

The first title in the Triumphant Comics Universe, *Scavengers*, will appear on the racks in July 1993 and is the result of a year's worth of development. In order to bring comic book fans the most carefully developed and supervised universe ever seen in the history of comics, this time has been used to put together a strong management and editorial team that can create, promote, and maintain a collectable universe.

Every Collector's Universe issue begins with a carefully crafted story that takes place at a specified time within the universe's chronology. The date the story takes place is printed right on the cover of the comic. This *time-stamping* conveys to the reader Triumphant's dedication to story and timeline integrity. Characters do not simply exist in the Triumphant Universe; characters are born, have birthdays, have anniversaries, take time to adventure, take time to rest, and even die, all on real days in the universe. This strict adherence to a timeline insures that Triumphant characters never appear in two places at the same time, unlike in other universes where the integrity is not so carefully monitored. This allows Triumphant's characters to develop as they age and continually become more interesting to the reader.

The story is then illustrated by top-notch, experienced comic

artists who provide their own vision of the characters and breathe life into them. These artists can put the flames into a fire and the softness into a gentle touch. It is their storytelling that brings the story off the pages and makes it a part of the reader's world.

The coloring is done by a talented human hand -- not by some emotionless computer. This is a slow and careful process, as Triumphant coloring is watercolored and airbrushed for full color reproduction.

The art is then separated by the same color separator who separates Valiant artwork. He makes sure that the printed images will faithfully reproduce the artists' efforts. The comic books themselves are printed by professional comic printers who have printed comics for Marvel, DC, Valiant, and Now. These printers are experts in their craft and they create the final product using only the highest quality inks and paper stock.

The final touch of each issue's exceptional qualities is the serial number which is printed on the front cover next to the total print run quantity of the book, thus making each book a unique collectable item.

Overseeing this entire process is a management team that includes Martin Schranz and John Tartaglione. Martin Schranz was *Wizard*'s founding business manager and was largely responsible for its high production quality. Martin will be on board bringing his knowledge accumulated during his twenty-five years working in the magazine industry as a printing and quality control supervisor. John Tartaglione has been a Marvel freelancer since the Golden Age. He is a former Marvel staff art director and has worked with Stan Lee, Jim Shooter, Jim Salicrup, and Jack Kirby. John brings his lifetime of comic experience in design and refining artistic talent to help make Triumphant Comics produce an unmatched visual impact.

Backing up this entire plan is an extensive advertising campaign which includes full color advertising in the Diamond Distributors, Capital City Distribution, and Heroes World Distribution ordering catalogs. In addition, Triumphant Comics has developed a "first look" promotion in which each retailer will receive a full color advance printing of the #1 issue of each title as it is solicited so that they can see the quality for themselves and be assured that Triumphant Comics will ship on time. Triumphant Comics intends to lead the industry in innovation, beginning with such concepts as "first look" promotions, serial numbering, limited print runs, a strict universe timeline, and double coupon promotions, and continuing on with promotions the likes of which the industry has never seen before.

Tundra News

Madman Out of Print

The first issue of the original *Madman* series by Mike Allred, released by Tundra Publishing in March 1992, has gone out of print.

The original print run for this series was 39,380. The first issue, cover priced at $3.95, is currently listed in back issue price guides at $4.50, a 12% increase in value. Back issue prices are expected to rise even further now that the book has become unavailable and demand continues to build.

"This was the most heavily, and steadily, re-ordered title we've ever had," said Steven Ohlson-Wardlaw, Tundra's Distribution Manager. "Tundra does a large back order business, but *Madman* was unusual in that orders grew as time went on, not gradually slacking off the way they typically do for a limited series. We were able to follow the success of the original run with a brand-new, ongoing full-color series, so interest never waned as word-of-mouth spread about this excellent new comic."

The remaining 400 copies are being solicited for June release. They will be made available ONLY in complete, signed sets with the other two issues in the series, at a price of $50.00. There are no more copies, and it will not be re-printed in the single-issue format.

A collected edition of the original series will be released in the fall; the first printing of the collection is limited to only 2000 copies. It is anticipated that a second printing will be needed to meet demand. These will be in the *Madman* Library Format, a consistent bookshelf format designed for the reader/collector. The second printing will be clearly marked and is slated to feature a new cover by Mike Allred.

The new series, *Madman Adventures*, is in full color comic format and shows no sign of slowing down.

Steven Ohlson-Wardlaw: "The initial orders for the new series far exceeded those for the first run. This is understandable because retailers were ordering the book blind back then. But even now that Madman is established, we are still finding that stores have not ordered high enough to stay ahead of the expanding readership, so they are constantly re-ordering to fill demand."

The second issue, released March 1993, completes the first 64-page story which will later be released in a deluxe collected edition in the *Madman* Library Format. The ongoing series of self-contained stories will appear in 48-page color comic format, cover priced at $2.95.

Warp News

New Blood Goes Monthly

Warp Graphics announces the promotion of *Elfquest: New Blood* from bi-monthly to monthly publication beginning with the release of *Elfquest: New Blood* #7 "King of the Hill" in July. "King of the Hill" is the second installment in a series of *New Blood* 'bedtime' stories written by Wendi Lee and Terry Beatty, with art by Gary Kato.

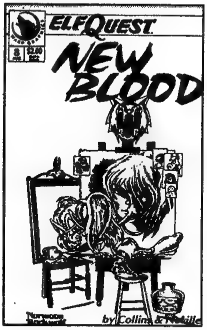
The title, which debuted last year with a 64-page full-color Summer Special, is the first Elfquest project not written and drawn solely by Wendy and Richard Pini. Utilizing the concept of the "Worldpool" -- defined as a creative maelstrom from whose swirling depths flow new views of the World of Two Moons -- *New Blood* showcases the talents of many of the industry's brightest stars.

Warp Graphics publisher Richard Pini, who edits the book, said, "Going monthly with *New Blood* represents just one more step in Elfquest's planned growth. We have a neat monthly continuity, and we get to spotlight twice as much great story and art as we did before!"

Managing Editor Deni Loubert was also enthusiastic regarding the change to monthly publication. "One of the nice things about a title like *New Blood* is the variety of styles and approaches we see, thanks to the different creative talents working on it," Loubert said. "Elfquest is a world with a fifteen year backstory, and it didn't take long for us to have the number of tales in-hand that we needed in order to go monthly."

"As a title, *New Blood* has gone

from crawling to walking stage, and is now poised to run," Richard Pini said. "Reader reaction has been solid and positive, and this just shows us all the more that bringing other talents into the fold was the right decision. With the several new titles we have planned for the remainder of 1993, Warp Graphics is saying, 'You want something that's good and different? Take a look at all the flavors of Elfquest you have available.'"



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Industry News

Virtual Reality At Gen Con

Join 18,000 game players at the world's biggest game convention, the GEN CON Game Fair! Highlighting this year's Game Fair are cutting edge virtual reality games from Dream Park Corporation and Virtual World Entertainment. This is just a tiny part of over 100 high-tech networked computer, video, and arcade games coming to Milwaukee.

Held August 19-22 at the MECCA Center in Milwaukee, this huge event (sponsored by TSR, Inc.) features four days of gaming in almost a dozen categories. This includes more than 1,000 computer, video, arcade, virtual reality, multi-player network, military, strategy, board, role-playing, and miniatures games!

- Climb into a *BattleTech* cockpit for the mech warrior fight of your life.

- Experience Larry Nivens' Ringworld in *Virtual Ringworld*, new computer games: *Revenge of the Patriarch* and the *Mythos Engine*, and test your skill in the *Virtual Parlor*.

- Compete in the hottest computer and video games including *MidiMaze, Lemmings, Ultima, Risk, Batman Returns, Black Crypt, M.U.L.E., Sonic, Falcon*, and others.

- Plus a dozen arcade games like *Tetris, Joust, Rampage, Double Dragon, Xybots, Tempest, Space Harrier, Quix, Centipede, I-Robot, Phoenix*, and *Black Tiger*.

- See movies like *Star Trek II, Fantastic Planet*, and *20 Million Miles to Earth*.

- Check out the $1 million science-fiction and fantasy art show and exhibit hall.

The 1993 Game Fair also unveils an expanded strategy boardgame track with special guest, Rich Berg; Science-Fiction Saturday, featuring Star Trek star George "Sulu" Takei; and a line-up of fantastic historical, science-fiction and fantasy miniatures and board game events.

The GEN CON Game Fair features hundreds of game tournaments, and is giving over $10,000 in prizes this year! Some of the biggest tournaments are the Avalon Hill Classics Open, RPGA network events, *MidiMaze, Monopoly*, and the BattleTech Miniatures Open. And don't miss Puffing Billy, the Games Magazine Triathalon, Mythos Virtual Reality Shootout, *Rubout*, the 13th Annual Miniatures Painting Competition, and *Star Fleet Battles*.

The convention also features Steve Lightle at a Marvel Comics mini-con; an exhibit hall with over 150 game manufacturers; its famous fantasy art show; dozens of game, art, and book celebrities like *New York Times* best-selling author R.A. Salvatore -- and much more!

The 1993 GEN CON Game Fair is THE game event of the year! So grab your friends and join the world's best gamers at the world's best convention. There's

something for everybody! Daily fees are just $5.00 for spectators and $10.00 for players.

To register, send your name and address (by June 1st) to: Registration Dept., 1993 GEN CON Game Fair, P.O. Box 756, Lake Geneva, Wisconsin 53147 USA.

After June 1, 1993, call Sandy Kinney at (414) 248-3625 ext. 424.

Retailer Programming For Comicfest '93 Expo

Comic Book Retailers International (CBRI), the comic industry's only trade association, will participate in the expo portion of Comicfest '93. CBRI will develop programming focused on the many aspects of comic retail business.

"The East Coast needs a big trade show," said Kathy Mullen, chief executive officer of Comic Attitudes, Piscataway, NJ, and president of the New Jersey chapter of CBRI. "The retail side of the comics business must continue to grow and develop with the rest of the comics industry. Getting together as retailers and with publishers and distributors, and providing each other with ideas and feedback is an important part of our industry's development."

CBRI currently has five chapters throughout the United States: New Jersey, New York, Delaware Valley (PA), Northern California, and Dallas-Fort Worth, and affiliates in Mexico, Europe, and the Philippine Islands.

This young trade group works to promote a positive public image of comics retailers, to develop cooperative relationships among retailers and the extended comic book family, to develop a higher level of professionalism among its members and to help them become better businesspeople, to assist members with marketing and advertising programs and to provide education in a wide variety of areas related to comics and retail sales.

"With the comics industry growing and changing so rapidly, a trade association can be an invaluable resource. CBRI is a young organization and we hope to give it the exposure it deserves at Comicfest," said David Greenhill, president of David Greenhill Promotions, promoter of the event.

"We look at Comicfest as one of the best opportunities on the East Coast to broaden the comics market and put Philadelphia on the map as a comics town," said Dane Strassman, president of the Delaware Valley chapter of CBRI and owner of Comicards in northeast Philadelphia.

Comicfest '93, the largest comic and collectibles entertainment event ever staged in the United States, expects to attract approximately 70,000 visitors. In addition to offering recent and classic comic books, Comicfest '93 will feature a variety of exhibits, events and activities that will appeal to science fiction and animation fans, trading cards collectors and video enthusiasts, among others.

In addition, the convention has lowered its ticket prices for the four-day show to attract first-time comics show visitors, announced David Greenhill, president of David Greenhill Promotions, promoter of the event.

Single-day tickets to this entertainment event will be $10 for adults and $6 for children 12 and under. Children five and under are free. It was previously announced that a one-day adult entry would be $12, and $7 for children 12 and under. The advance purchase four-day pass is $35 for adults and $22 for children.

"Our main goal is to promote a high-quality show that will attract not only comics enthusiasts and collectors, but will appear to a much broader audience including families with children," explained Greenhill.

"We know that there are many people, adults and children, who don't take advantage of all that comic books can offer. We want to introduce al these people to the industry and show them how interesting and unique this type of entertainment really is.

"To make it affordable for families to attend, and to compete with other Philadelphia-area entertainment attractions, we felt a lower ticket price was in everyone's best interest," said Greenhill.

Although other major comics shows typically command admission fees as high as $18 per person, they generally attract primarily comic enthusiasts. Greenhill believes Comicfest '93, held October 8-11 at the Philadelphia Civic Center, is the first show to aggressively pursue a more mainstream audience.

"With all that we're offering at Comicfest, mainstream consumers and enthusiasts will get a lot for their money," said Greenhill. "The comics industry has grown tremendously in the last few years, with a comic book on nearly every conceivable subject available. There is literally something for everyone out there. We want everyone to come and enjoy

themselves."

An extensive advertising and public relations campaign is planned to attract an estimated 70,000 visitors to Comicfest. With sponsors and exhibitors including Marvel, DC, Image, Malibu, Dark Horse, Topps, Archie, Wizard Publications, Krause Publications, Diamond Distributors, SkyBox International, and TSR Hobbies, among others, it is likely that all visitors to the Philadelphia Civic Center that weekend will find something entertaining.

Batman Animated Movie

Hottest on the licensing front is the announcement of a *Batman: The Animated Series* theatrical-length adventure from Warner Brothers! The movie -- reportedly a Joker tale with a slightly harder edge than the stories featured in the Fox daytime series -- is slated for release in December of 1993. Start looking for new licensed material very shortly!

War No More

"This war, like the next war, is a war to end war."
David Lloyd George,
British Liberal statesman

This line sums up the irony of the next art show being presented by the Words & Pictures Museum in Northampton, Massachusetts. *War No More*, a display of stunning artwork with an anti-war message as its central theme, opens on May 18 at the Words & Pictures Museum. The show features art by a number of renowned classic artists in the comic field, including Jack Kirby, John Severin, and Frank Redondo as well as several of the most popular contemporary artists including George Pratt, Bill Sienkiewicz, and Kevin Eastman.

War No More, the Museums fourth show, once again marks a complete change in nature for the Museum, which has been open since last October. The Museum has proven tremendously popular to a wide audience that includes many comics novices as well as the seasoned fans, traveling to see originals by their favorite artists. "We are confident that many of the thousand plus folks who have visited this latest show featuring the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles will visit again in the next couple of months and be amazed at both the quality and content of this show," states Maryann Meeks, Director of the Museum.

Amongst the over one hundred pieces on display, featured artwork includes two complete Sgt. Rock stories from *Army at War* by John Severin and Frank Redondo and a sixteen page story by Jack Kirby from the series *Our Fighting Forces*. Also included is the stunning *Enemy Ace War Idyll*, by George Pratt, *Dictator* trading card art by Bill Sienkiewicz, a short story *Fak II* by Kevin Eastman, and several images of war propaganda spanning the period from the Civil War until the present day.

The show will run through both Memorial Day and the Fourth of July. Admission is free and the Museum is open to the public from 12-5 Tuesday through Sunday (closed on Mondays). For further information or to become a Member of the Museum call (413) 586-8545.

Mirage Creates NEXT Comics!

Interview by Dorothy Sloan.

Dorothy Sloan: *What led to the creation of NEXT comics, and what is the NEXT universe?*

Michael Dooney: Well, at the time we were working on *Plastron Cafe* as our first venture into publishing something besides the *Turtles*, we started to talk about the possibility of actually publishing other ongoing titles again. With the success of Image and Valiant and their connected universe-type books, it seemed to make sense to set up a Mirage universe. Originally the idea was that the NEXT universe would include the TMNT and then we might develop other characters for it, but then it went on from there to something different.

Peter Laird: That's essentially true, although I kind of hold a more rosy picture close to my heart, that we all just wanted to work together and share universes of creativity. But no, the NEXT universe will be a slightly different place than the one inhabited by the TMNT. Although there may be a day where the Turtles are integrated into the NEXT universe, and vice versa, we decided that *Xenotech, Stupid Heroes,* and *Bioneers* would all be part of this shared universe and published with the NEXT imprint to set them off from the Turtle book. The neat thing is that, even though all three books are quite different in their approach to the superhero genre, in the feel and the flavor of each one, they all dovetail quite nicely into each other.

DS: *So there will be elements common to all three books?*

PL: Yeah, that's what's cool. There's a shared history -- if a President's name is Johnson in *Bioneers,* then there'll be a President Johnson in *Stupid Heroes* and *Xenotech.* You know, if somebody invents anti-gravity in *Xenotech,* then we'll all be able to deal with that too. So what's neat is that there'll be little throw-away details that'll be in all three...

MD: One of the fun parts that I found is you not only have what you come up with yourself to work with, but you also can kind of feed off of what the other guys are doing. And if you can get it out before they get it into their book, it seems like your idea!!!

DS: *Do Stupid Heroes, Xenotech, and Bioneers all take place on Earth?*

PL: Yeah, it's kind of contemporary Earth, but with alterations.

MD: Right, like the Xenotech team is based in New York City, in the old 1939 World's Fair Grounds, which no longer exist. So we're going to mess with real stuff like that. We're thinking of it basically as the real world, but with some changes. If things would make the world more interesting, we'll put 'em in there!

A.C. Farley: The team in my book, the Bioneers, is based in Amherst, Massachusetts, but then I have people working as asteroid miners, too. I have Space Station Freedom up there now, and there's a moon base. As far as space exploration, I want to show where we should be now -- where we could have been now, if everything didn't get flopped up.

MD: Well, it's kind of silly. That always struck me in the Marvel books, where it's supposed to be the real world, but you have the Avengers and the X-Men going to the ends of the universe every other issue, while, you know, we're still working on the space shuttle! I would be thinking, that Reed Richards and the X-Men, they're really stingy with their technology -- they could be helping NASA out with all this stuff! They've got a time machine, for cryin' out loud!

PL: I mean, the Fantastic Four, in their first issue, flew to the moon, into the Van Allen Belt, or whatever the heck it is. It just makes no sense.

ACF: Things don't have to make 100% sense, though. There's an incredible level of suspension of disbelief people have, reading comics -- a lot more than watching a movie, I'd say.

PL: Well, we're going to try to keep the necessity of suspension of disbelief to a minimum.

DS: *Could you give the basic background for the new titles? Let's start with you, Peter.*

PL: Well, the basic concept behind *Stupid Heroes* is that superheroes, or rather people with super powers and abilities who would be the heroes or villains, got those abilities from a combination of things: pollution, changes in the environment, cosmic radiation, etc. All those outside effects only serve to activate or catalyze in certain individuals what I'm calling the "metagene", which is something that, once catalyzed, allows the human form

and physiology to develop special powers. That's great, in most cases, because who doesn't want to be able to fly and lift cars over their heads. But the down side is that it can be fatal.

MD: Also, not everybody can lift cars and stuff. Some of them have really dumb powers.

PL: Right! Like one of the minor characters I have, his power is that he can absorb or dissolve hair. I'll call him Hairball or something like that. Anyway, there's a disease, called Dementia Dominus, which affects those who have the metagene. A super-powered being with Dementia Dominus gradually becomes stupider and stupider until he loses all higher mental function. Then he goes into a state of losing all involuntary muscle control, which is in turn invariably fatal to the individual involved. Everyone who becomes super-powered is at risk, but it's not necessarily true that everyone who's at risk is going to fall prey to this fatal disease. That's basically the plot thread, getting Mike and Craig to agree to the inclusion of Dementia Dominus in the shared universe but now it will be a background thread in their books also. Anyway, these diseased and weakened superbeings can get out of control and pose great danger to society at large, which is where these special teams come in to deal with their capture...

ACF: People who attempt to capture and contain an out-of-control Stupid Hero are called 'wranglers'. There's a lot of money that they can make doing this, because there's a bounty for the Stupid Heroes. Here's an example: Mike and Pete and I could decide that we're going to try to catch an out-of-control Stupid Hero to get the 5 million dollar bounty that's on him, but we would probably be killed trying. Very few private individuals are going to be able to go and wrangle these out of control superbeings -- it's like trying to win the lottery, only if you lose, you die. The only people who can really do it effectively are large corporations or the government. The government has a branch of NASA, called SWAC (Special Weapons and Containment), that deals with the capture of superbeings. They operate mainly in *Stupid Heroes*, but will interact throughout all the other books, too.

PL: The interesting thing is that in Mike's team no one has superpowers per se -- they're gifted with special machines that were given to them by aliens. And in Craig's book the powered characters are not natural, they're bio-engineered.

DS: What's the idea behind Bioneers?

ACF: Actually, when I was thirteen I had an idea for a character, the Dragonfighter, who is now the Garth Felis character in *Bioneers*. It all started then, as a sword-and-sorcery story with heavy doses of science and technology thrown in there. It sucked! Some type of apocalyptic thing had happened, some huge comet had passed too close to the Earth and fried the atmosphere, and uh...

PL: We've heard all that before!

ACF: But it's very different now -- the sword-and-sorcery part is all gone, and it's more science fiction now. Now it involves a government contractor, Andersohn Associates, which as been given a sanction to perform illegal bio-technology experiments in order to produce superhuman beings. The Bioneers program, in other words, is a black program; that is, it's funded by the government, but it's secret and they'll deny any acknowledgment of its existence. Andersohn Associates is headed up by a mutant, Cypher Kray, who has complete understanding and telepathic control over machine intelligence. Janus Kowalski, a world-class scientist, joins Andersohn Associates and establishes the Bioneers program. Using radical bio-engineering and rapid-learning techniques, she creates two superhuman beings, Garth Felis and Carmilla O'Reilly. Together with four highly intelligent robots created by Kray and herself, these superhuman beings are used as countermeasures against extraordinary threats.

DS: Will the Bioneers ever fight against bad guys who appear in the other two books?

ACF: Sometimes. But the initial conflict in the book will pit the Bioneers against another group called the Recombatants, who are bio-engineered mixtures of different life forms, the product of another government-funded black program. The only thing is, the Recombatants program is cancelled because Edward Bushkill, the scientist in

who are bio-engineered mixtures of different life forms, the product of another government-funded black program. The only thing is, the Recombatants program is cancelled because Edward Bushkill, the scientist in charge, is crazy. Even after his project is cancelled, he keeps doing it. He's very wealthy. He's like Pete – except he's building stupid robots, and he's evil and he's making wacky Recombatant guys! He's created three Recombatants and two very stupid robots; he'd really like to get the positronic brains from the Bioneers robots.

Anyway, the Bioneers' existence becomes publicly known in the first three issues. There's going to be some trouble with that because people are afraid of them and don't like the whole idea of them. But, and here's where one of the main plot lines from Pete's book ties in, then the Bioneers will help out with corralling some Stupid Heroes and all of a sudden it's okay that the whole project was done. Then the Recombatants may also enter into the whole scenario as Stupid Hero wranglers. All of a sudden, if the Bioneers are legal and public, they're going to have to allow the Recombatants. But the Recombatants have been trained to be offensive military, while the Bioneers are more like a peace-keeping force.

MD: My turn!

DS: *Okay! What about Xenotech – what's that all about?*

MD: The premise of my book is that there is this benevolent alien race, called the Tessadi, who have been around for zillions of years. One of the things they discover while exploring the universe is that rather than going through time-consuming regular space travel, where there's generations involved, they can open these dimensional doorways between worlds and just kind of walk through to another world. They were lovin' this! They went all over the universe, visiting different worlds a travelers. After they'd been doing this for quite a while, they found out that these rifts that they had opened originally would periodically re-open. They re-open on the same world where they originally appeared, but in a slightly different place than they did the previous time. When this happens, they connect whatever two worlds were traveled between, or anything in between, like there could be some kind of weird interdimensional access routes. So, once the Tessadi find this out, they stop their excursions to the other worlds, stop opening new rifts, and try to figure out a way to close the ones that they had already opened. But no matter what they do, they can't figure out how to do that. So, what they do is set up this giant network wheel they establish special "Vortex Teams" on each of the affected worlds. These teams are in charge of defending that planet from whatever comes through the interdimensional gateways. So it could be that when they open, nothing happens. That'll never happen in my book, because you always have to have a shot of some kind of cool thing steppin' through. Sometimes it'll be mean, nasty, out-for-no-good aliens just steppin' through to wreck havoc. It could link different time periods – I thought it would be cool if we could have dinosaurs coming through, robots, stuff like that.

DS: *Will other rift guardians, like the Xenotech team, ever come through?*

MD: I suppose they could, but only inadvertently because they

can't leave their station, you know. They have established headquarters to monitor these rifts. They don't know where the rifts will open up. They have a basic timetable, but they don't know exactly when and where things will happen.

DS: *So how did the Xenotech team form?*

MD: Well, you see, the way the Tessadi recruits teams to guard the portals is that they abduct people, without their knowledge, and genetically alter them to fit a specific profile. At the same time, they implant them with a special mesh right underneath their skin, called "The Net", which is specially configured for that person's genetic make-up. This mesh is linked with a special combat suit that exists in another dimension and enables the person, when the suit is called up, to have special abilities. So they'd be a normal person walking down the street, but if a situation arose, they could summon up this suit from the other dimension where it was waiting and be ready for action. Well, what happened specifically with the Xenotech team is that Earth's previous "Vortex Team" was killed, leaving the planet undefended.

Unfortunately, the next rift was scheduled to open before the Tessadi could go through the whole time-consuming process (years!) of altering people and making new suits, so what they did was find the people who had the closest genetic makeup to the old team and genetically tinker with them to make them more like the old team so the suits worn by the previous team would "accept" them. So this makes the dynamic of the Xenotech team kind of interesting, to say the least.

DS: What's this I hear about a big cross-over issue?

MD: It's called *Maelstrom*, and the events in it mover directly from *Stupid Heroes #3*.

PL: We decided that we wanted to do the first three issues of each book as a mini-series, and then tie them all together with a mondo biggo crossover book. It should be pretty wild-looking I think, because as it stands now, we're each going to do a third of it. It's going to be one continuous story – probably about 40 pages – and we're each going to do a third of it. The story's already plotted. It'll involve characters from each of the three books, but not the entire cast, I don't think.

ACF: Not all at once, but the story is one complete story in three parts, one drawn by each of the three of us.

DS: What influences did all of you draw upon for these comics?

PL: Well, I think that, although we tend to joke about it, it really isn't too far off base to say that almost everything in comics owes something to Jack Kirby. So, speaking for myself, I'm really drawing heavily on him in my books. I've had a lot of fun emulating his style. His drawing is just so expressionistic. You look at his pages and they're not cluttered – the way the lines are drawn helps convey a sense of what the characters are all about. Well, I think that the essential thing is just to have fun with it; that's what Jack told us and that's my motto for this project, just to have fun with it.

MD: The work that most of us have done for the past, what, five years or so, has been almost exclusively the Turtles stuff. Somehow or other we have all maintained our enthusiasm for the Turtles, which I think is saying something, when you do it every day, all day long. But this is our first opportunity to do something else, so I think there is a strong element of pulling out all the stops on this stuff, and you know, this is your shot. When I started working on this, rather than just looking at what is currently popular, I couldn't help but go back and re-read and look at and devour all the things that I had collected and read when I was growing up. So although I think my book has more of a 90's look than what Pete's doing with *Stupid Heroes*, the feel I'm going for is that Kirby/*Fantastic Four* feel. I'm not going to have everyone standing around dramatically in every scene, you know, with grimaces on their faces. There'll be time for the grimaces, but there'll be time for the back-biting and the kidding around also.

ACF: Working on the TMNT definitely influenced me to a large degree because up until then I hadn't really done any completed comics, I was doing book covers and role-playing game art. Doing a comic is a lot different. My thinking until then had been so focused on seeing everything as one picture, and when you're doing comics, you have to say everything with, like, 23 pages. I'm sure nobody looks at one page in a comic and judges the whole comic on the one page. And when you're the on doing the comic, I don't think you can either. You can't say, "Well, this one page really sucks, so this whole comic sucks to me." Well, what I'm getting at is that having done the two Turtle books, I see a big difference between what I was doing in them and what I'm doing in these books now, so I'm happy about that. When I was working on the TMNT, I would try to stick really close to what everyone else had done the Turtles and at the same time, interpret it a little. All the runnin', jumpin', leapin', hoppin', gimacin', sword-swingin' stuff that Pete and Mike and Jim and the others had the Turtles doing, I was looking at that going, "Wow that's cool, I'm gonna make them do that kind of stuff too." And I want the Bioneers to be doing it -- I want robots jumping up in the air and flipping around. I want a lot of action, a lot of stuff going on.

DS: Given the amazing volume of superhero/team-type comics out there, what kind of niche do you hope to carve in the market with the NEXT universe?

MD: One of the things that we've talked a lot about is the comics that we grew up on versus the comics that fall into that flashy niche that are currently popular now. There's no way around the fact that a lot of those comics that are real flashy are really neat to look at, but when you read them as a story, there's not much there. It brings to mind the analogy of how everyone compares what these guys are doing to MTV, because they grew up on MTV. Okay, if that's the analogy, then I think that some of these comics are like heavy-metal music played at full volume all the time -- there's no peaks and valleys, there's no leading up to the fight scenes. The people are taut and

bristled and pumped even when they're standing there, you know, at the bus station.

ACF: Yeah, there's no pacing.

PL: What Mike just said, about Kirby's ability to pace a story, I mean, one of my favorite things in Kirby books is when people are sitting around eating. I just love the way he did that. It was so perfectly done. The sight of The Thing stuffing a wedge of pumpkin pie in his mouth, you know, just give me such a thrill. There's this character in one of the New Gods books called Terrible Turpin, this kind of burly, beefy police detective, and I just remember this one scene, he's eating a sandwich, and it's just like, you know, you won't see Rob Liefeld drawing a character eating a sandwich, you won't see Todd McFarlane doing it.

MD: And if they do it, it won't look like they're eating a sandwich -- it would look like they're devouring a planet. AARRRGH!

PL: You know, but Kirby could do it and it would be an integral part of the story, because it would say something about the character and set the pace of that scene, leading into the next scene.

ACF: Stuff like that too, it brings the reader closer to the character, because it's an ordinary act by this extraordinary individual. It's cool even when characters touch each other in comics, 'cause then you get a tactile sense from them too. We want a balance between the story and the art -- great art and great stories!

PL: For me anyway, it developed into a thing where you know, I just come back to that "just have fun with it." I mean, I respect people who try to make comic books high art. I personally don't think it'll ever really happen. I think that comic books are one of those art forms that are valid, and have a lot of worth and substance to them, but they're essentially, in the end, an entertainment that is in some ways, disposable entertainment.

ACF: Yeah, popular culture...

PL: And for that reason I don't think that we should get down to trying to polish and hone and sculpt and noodle these things to death. They should be done for the fun of it, for the spirit of entertainment and enjoyment. That's the approach that I'm taking. And you know, I think, what more can you ask?

ACF: I guess what we're trying to say here is, if people don't like these comics we're doing, they don't like comics, they just don't like comics. We're gonna be doing good comics. I see what Mike's doing, I see what Pete's doing; we're all working hard to make some good, entertaining comics. If people can't be entertained by what we're doing then there's no hope!

MD: One of the questions that I ask myself when I look at what I'm doing and when I see what Craig's doing and what Pete's doing is, "Would I, as someone who still buys comics eery week, buy these books?" and I think that I could honestly say that I would, and I'd like 'em.

PL: Yeah, that is the crux.

MD: Crux... I like that -- I'm gonna use that as a character!

PL: Oh yeah, I'm also dedicated to making at least half of my characters not have stupid names like "Rimshot" or "Bloodfire" or --

MD: Haven't we agreed that we're not going to use "Blood" at all? Or "Death"?

PL: Or "Star"!

MD: Until we do our second titles, which will be "BloodDeathStar 2000", "Spawn of the BloodDeathStar", and "Deathbath 2000"! And nobody's name will be and action! Nobody can be named a verb.

DS: *What are your plans for Xenotech, Bioneers, and Stupid Heroes after the big cross-over?*

PL: Well, we have to see what the response of the public is. If it's good, I can see the books continuing on. There's certainly no dearth of story material, or characters.

ACF: I really want to keep doing it as a bi-monthly book, if they do well.

MD: Let's hope that this is just the beginning, folks.

DS: *If all three books continue and become ongoing titles, would you have any plans to do cross-overs with other publishers?*

PL: It's possible, I mean we've done it before with the Turtles. I don't see why not. I think it's premature to think about doing it though, because there's still quite a bit of ground to cover. Without giving too much away, with the cross-over book we're doing, we actually set up the next step of this shared universe. Something happens in that book which completely, and in a very dramatic way, affects the NEXT universe, something that shifts the public's perceptions of superbeings and also reveals some interesting facts or mysteries about some of the characters.

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ULTRAVERSE

A Conversation With ...Chris Wozniak

by Joe Martin

Chris Wozniak is the current penciller for *The Solution*, one of the upcoming titles to be released from Malibu as part of their new Ultraverse line. Here's what he has to say in yet another Arena Magazine exclusive...

Joe Martin: *How were you contacted by Malibu?*

Chris Wozniak: Initially, I had some complaints about how Marvel was treating me as far as having to go through a great deal of pain to get anything like a raise or assignments on time. I was bitching on the phone to Art Nichols and he told me that he'd just gotten a contract from Malibu and pretty much read it to me over the phone. It sounded like a pretty decent work for hire deal. I called John Lowe up -- he was the inker I was working with -- and I said, "Let's do a Malibu book. What have we got to lose?"

Two days later, we were in California.

JM: *Just like that? They signed you up to do* ***The Solution*** *right away?*

CW: Uh, well, yeah we were offered *The Solution* but, when we found out that *Hardcase* was going to be the flagship title for the Ultraverse, we wanted that. Everybody was cool about it but James Callahan had already signed the contract to pencil the book so we had to bail out.

JM: *Bummer, huh? But you ended up on* ***Solution*** *since you couldn't get* ***Hardcase*** *and how many issues have you penciled so far?*

CW: At this point just the first one.

JM: *Anything you enjoyed out of doing that?*

CW: There's a character I particularly enjoy called Tech. It's a female character. Whenever I draw her things seem to spark a little bit.

JM: *What makes her such a favorite?*

CW: I don't know. When I first get reference on a project I'll go through the package and go, "Oh, this is the guy I like" or "this is the girl I like". When it comes down to drawing it though, things can come out completely different. I once did a few issues of *Excalibur* and I really like Nightcrawler but I couldn't draw him to save my life for some reason! It just wouldn't click.

JM: *Let's talk about the writer, James Hudnall. Is there anything about his scripts that you could comment on?*

CW: Hudnall is an interesting guy. He's like a little entity [chuckles]. It's not so much his scripts

Wozniak's art for ***The Solution****. All other art is character sketches by Hoang Nyugen.*

and writing as it is the atmosphere he creates. Comics is such a visual medium and when you're reading a full script, you get to see all the dialogue and the plot, and then either something will click or it won't.

JM: *You're also working with John Lowe?*

CW: Yeah, John will be doing the inking. He also inked some *Spider-Man 2099* stuff for Marvel and that's how we got hooked up. Actually, I got hooked up with John through my former assistant. It's one of those, "I have a friend of a friend" sort of deals. He came over to my place and showed me some stuff and I called the office and got him a job.

JM: *That worked out cool. So what do you think will be the greatest point of interest that will draw the readers to* ***The Solution****?*

CW: My art, of course [laughs]! Honestly, I have a feel for the character, Tech. She's not the most flamboyant character and there are more visually stunning things going on than her but to me she seems to be really fleshed out. Even when there are other things going on I tend to bring her to the foreground. Anytime she's in a scene with the other guys I downplay the others purposely. I don't know if Hudnall likes that but...

JM: *But, hey, the readers might!*

CW: Yeah [laughs]!

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ULTRAVERSE
A Conversation With ...James Hudnall

by Joe Martin

Joe Martin: *Who exactly are the Solution?*

James Hudnall: *The Solution* is a cast of four people, each with a different ability and wildly different personalities and backgrounds. They're freelance trouble shooters. Basically, super-powered mercenaries. But they have an overall mission. The mercenary work helps keep them financed. Their ad says: "Got a problem? We're the Solution!"

JM: *Could you give us a brief description of the characters?*

JH: The leader's name is Lela Cho. Her handle is "Tech." She's a wealthy Asian woman whose company was stolen away from her by a powerful crime Triad. She's enhanced herself with "wetware," biological implants that give her control over almost any technological devices. Troy Wilde, who goes by the name of "Dropkick," is a martial artist who knows a secret style handed down by an obscure sect. He's also been enhanced by bio-tech so that he is superhuman is physical ways. "Shadowmage" is a woman named Aera who's not human, but rather a member of a mysterious race called the Aerwan. On her world, her race has developed magic as their science. They have a unique approach to casting spells never seen before in comics. Finally there's Vurk, who goes by the name of "Outrage." A lot of the time, he looks like this seriously intense dude who has scary eyes and a nasty smile. But when he goes into action he morphs into a monstrously huge demonic form which can take and dish out unbelievable amounts of damage. Like Aera, Vurk is not human. He belongs to a race known as the Darkur.

JM: *Why have they banded together?*

JH: Lela Cho inherited a large electronics firm based in Hong Kong when her father died. But a powerful Triad known as the "Dragon's Fang" managed to steal the company away from her. She used the wealth she had left to enhance herself and then went out looking to form a team that could help her take back her company. Her searches led to the others. Unfortunately, the Dragon's Fang is not easy prey and their battle is going to take some time. So to pay for their expenses, they take on work helping people fight against ultra-human trouble makers. The other team members are in it because they needed some kind of family unit to survive. Each of them has their own story and problems.

JM: *That's cool. Okay, there's the Triad. Are there other antagonists in the story? What's the main conflict?*

JH: There are a lot of antagonists, but the main ones are the Dragon's Fang Triad and the Darkurians who are out to get Vurk for something he did. There are also a lot of other conflicts. Aera and Vurk's people have been at war for centuries and they are on the same team. Not as friends, though. Lela wants her company back. Troy is on the run from his sect, which considers him a renegade. And there are a lot of other surprises I won't spoil right now.

JM: *Okay. What would you say to lock readers into this book? As if you haven't said enough!*

JH: Are you tired of all the lame super-hero teams out there? Are you tired of boring non-stories that go nowhere and are just the same old rehashes of rehashes? But you want to read some good, kick ass super-hero fiction that brings back the excitement you used to feel? Well, look no further! I'm here to tell you this book is so hot, it's gone super-nova. I'm not hyping it. People who've read the scripts are stoked. The art is great. If you're the betting type, put your money on this horse! You'll win.

JM: *Wow! Good job. So, how are your dealings with Malibu?*

JH: They couldn't be better. It's the best publisher I've ever worked for, bar none. They're great guys, really supportive, and the pay is excellent. What more can I ask for? This is the company to watch, folks. Take my word for it.

Partial List of Comic Credits for James Hudnall

Comics

Espers **(1-5), Eclipse Comics**
Strikeforce Morituri **(21-31),**
Alpha Flight **(73, 76-86),**
The Electric Undertow **(1-4),**
Lex Luthor: The Unauthorized Biography,
Rick Mason: The Agent Interface **(1-8),**
The Psycho **(1-3),**
Superman **(56),**
Adventures of Superman **(479),**
Action Comics **(666)**
Legends of the Dark Knight **(31)**
Born to be Wild **("ZEBRAS")**
Sinking
Hardcase **(on going series)**
The Solution **(on-going series)**
Streets **(1-3)**
Twister **(1-4)**
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Clive Barker's Razorline

By Dan Souder

Clive Barker, popular writer/director, has joined forces with Marvel to debut a new imprint of extreme superhero comics, known as Razorline. Barker has been a prominent force on the best-seller charts for years, with such eerie horror masterpieces as *The Great and Secret Show* and *Imajica*, along with directing (among others) *Nightbreed* and *Hellraiser*, successful movies based on his own heart-rendering concepts. Barker has also dabbled in the field of comics, having several graphic novels and, most noticeably, the continuing *Hellraiser* book from Epic adapted from his works. Again showcasing his versatility, Barker has master-minded *Hyperkind, Ectokid, Hokum & Hex*, and *Saint Sinner*, the four new titles soon to be released under the Razorline imprint. Unfortunately for Barker-maniacs, this line is simply Barker-inspired, so although he created these characters, he will not be involved in the day-in and day-out business of bringing them to life. Also, astute Barker fans will notice the absence of Dan Chichester from these titles. Chichester is a regular contributor/adaptor to the other Barker books being published, and his Barker-esque writing style will be missed. Just what will these Razorline books be like? Let's find out.

The first release will be *Hyperkind*, brought to you by writer Fred Burke and artist Paris Cullins. *Hyperkind* opens with a "Golden Age" superhero team called the Paxis, who fought crime in those innocent, care-free days of yesteryear. That is, until a mysterious force destroyed them one by one. Shift the scene to the present day, when the Paxis's former powers are reborn into modern teenagers. I use "modern" in the strictest sense of the word, as these kids share the problems faced by many real-life teens today. The group's leader is a suicidal rich girl, and consists of a jock with no self-confidence or self-esteem, a recovering drug addict, and a homeless street-wise rebel. Based around Hollywood Blvd., the series will focus on the personal interaction of these characters with each other, with a heavy emphasis on action as they battle the mysterious force that returns in an attempt to also destroy these young heroes. These kids have modern concerns and attitudes, as opposed to the bread and butter teens in other super-groups. This series combines nice art, a gritty style, and realistic character motives, attitudes, and outlooks into a big cauldron that, once finished, could be the tastiest morsel of the bunch.

The next debut from Razorline is *Ectokid*, featuring James (*Legends of the Dark Knight*) Robinson's scripts and Steven Skroce's artwork. Be warned, this ain't the Ghostbusters! Dex Mungo is a typical teenager, whose only affliction is his occasional migraine headaches. Dex realizes that something is not right with these, which leads to his discovery that his left eye sees into another world! His mother then shocks Dex by telling him his father did not die of natural causes, as was previously believed, and that he may be trapped on the other dimension Dex can see. This prompts his quest through the Ectosphere to find his father's spirit; a place inhabited by ghouls, demons, and other ghostly beings. Becoming a hero along the way, when Dex later finds his father he becomes privy to a secret that could alter our world's destiny! Of the new series, *Ectokid* seems to most greatly reflect Barker's "normal" writings. This merging of superhero with super-horror should prove to be thought-provoking as well as entertaining. With this premise and Skroce's decent art, whose biggest strength lies in his composition, this series will be hard pressed not to be a hit.

The final July release is *Hokum & Hex* from Frank Lovece and Anthony Williams, a drastic step away from usual Barker output. This one's main focus appears to be comedy (?!), placing a down-and-out stand-up comic named Trip Munroe in the role of a Dr. Strange-like mystical character. Oh, well. As long as he never says, "By the Hoary Hoasts of Hoggoth!" this guy's okay by me. Trip is granted god-like mystical powers and is clueless when it comes to wielding them. However, he is mankind's last (lost?) hope in defending Earth from a galactic overlord. His inexperience actually strikes fear in his enemies' hearts, as the power is completely unpredictable in Trip's hands. It will be intriguing to see how a Barker attempt at comedy is handled. It seems like a long shot, but maybe they can pull it off. Williams's pencils, although cartoony, perfectly suit a series of this vein. If done right, *Hokum & Hex* could aspire to be the most fun, enjoyable read of any comic since the early days of *The Tick*.

Overall, the Razorline imprint should be a hit, depending on how well the creative teams run with the Barker concepts. It would be nice to see a little more Clive Barker involvement, but then it would also be nice to see a monthly book from Brian Bolland. You take what you can get.

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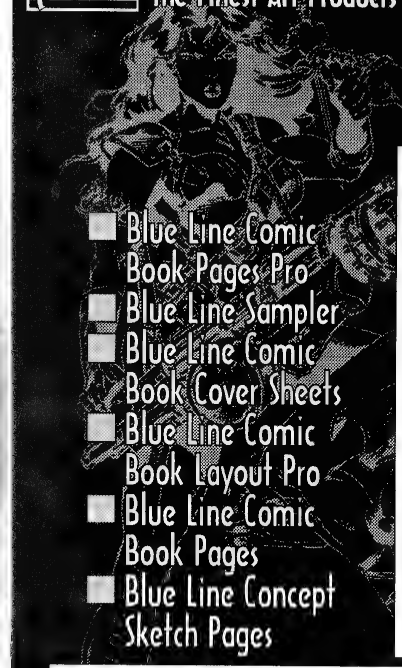

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COMICS NOW

by Jerry Smith

Special "Reign of the Supermen" Edition

The Reign of the Supermen is upon us. Superman couldn't stay dead forever--or, according to the four new characters each claiming to be him, certain pieces of him couldn't stay dead. This is no great surprise, whoever didn't realize this wouldn't happen in time hasn't checked the number of Superman lunchboxes and underoos available at K-Mart. As usual though, the creative forces at DC have put an enticing twist on Superman's rise from the dead.

Instead of saying that Superman just got better and popped out of his grave (although I'm sure that's eventually coming), DC has done one better and given us four engaging, totally different new characters, each with their own superpowers and claim to the Superman legacy. Each has a "piece" of Superman in their makeup that gives these claims validity. In order of interest, enter the vigilante, the kid, the cyborg, and the steelworker.

First, the vigilante. Described in *Action Comics* #687 as "Dirty Harry in a cape," this Superman actually possesses the physical body of Clark Kent. Resurrected as pure energy by the Kryptonian technology in the Fortress of Solitude, the energy form of Clark Kent's consciousness projects itself to Superman's grave and inhabits his body. The result of this merging is not a complete and whole Superman, but a being corrupted by Kryptonian machines into a cold, emotionless avenger. His limited powers are channeled by the machines at the Fortress of Solitude, not the sun, as Superman's were. Also, he must wear protective goggles to shield the body's eyes from excessive sunlight.

This character is perhaps the most provocative of the four. His manner is reminiscent of Superman in "The Krypton Man" saga that ran through the Super-titles a few years back, where a Kryptonian object called "the Eradicator" turned Superman into an arrogant, emotionless being (kind of like George Stephanopoulos) that flew standing up and wore Kryptonian garb. This Superman's costume resembles that outfit, except with a cape.

The vigilante Superman shows quickly how different he is from the Superman we've come to know. He stops a crook from robbing a woman in Metropolis, and when the bad guy shoots a gun at him and shouts, "You can't be Superman--he's dead!", the Kryptonian looks at him calmly and says, "No. You are," and kills him by pushing him through a brick wall. This is not the honorable Superman who vowed never to take a life.

It will be intruguing to see in future storylines whether or not this Superman gets away with his actions and attitude. Would society stand for a being as powerful as Superman who kills people? Perhaps eventually the other Supermen will hunt him down and try to bring him in. Time will tell.

Our second contestant is the "kid" Superman (but don't call him Superboy). As revealed in *The Adventures of Superman* #501, this character is the result of a Cadmus

Project (a top-secret government science installation) cloning experiment. Cadmus managed to steal Superman's dead body for a time--before Supergirl found out and kindly asked them to return it (after breaking a few walls, arms, and legs). They managed to create a clone, but the "experiment" escaped before they could indoctrinate it with whatever government directives they were going to instill in him. Plus, the clone had only aged to approximately thirteen. Thus, the teenaged Superman is loosed on Metropolis.

This Superbo--man is an obnoxious teenage punk, and he (and the readers) revel in it. Oh, he's a good guy (meaning he's not evil), but picture yourself at thirteen years of age with the powers of a god and no parental direction. Get the idea? The first thing this kid does is visit the Daily Planet in order to tell the world he's back. He ends up turning Jimmy Olsen upside-down for calling him Superbo--well, you know--and chasing skirts. He ends up being easily manipulated by a female reporter into running a gauntlet of gangsters to bring a mob boss to justice while the TV cameras run. He seems to be heading for the job of media darling, without realizing he's being used by the media. Will he mature? Will he look at women as something other than adolescent sex objects? Will he wake up at all (hey, uh, don't tell him I said that, okay?)?

If nothing else, this Superman will be fun to read about. The idea is to make this character Clark Kent who wasn't raised with values and moral attitudes by the Kents. Will he have an id to restrain his ego? It'll be fun finding out.

The third Superman candidate is the strangest. He's a cyborg, plain and simple. Half-man, half-metal, end of story. During an examination in *Superman* #78, Superman's old pal Professor Emil Hamilton pronounced that this Superman's metal parts were Kryptonian in origin, and his organic parts perfectly matched the real Superman's DNA. In Hamilton's opinion, this was the real Superman, returned to life.

Unfortunately, the cyborg Superman's memory is a bit spotty. He doesn't remember much of his former life, but he did remember his death. His first act upon his return was to take the body of his killer, Doomsday, tie it to an asteroid, and hurl it into space.

There's not much to go on so far about this Superman's personality or the way he will conduct himself. He does admit to Jim Harper, the Guardian, when he appropriates Doomsday's body from the Cadmus Project, "I've come back, Harper. I'm different ... due to the damage. But it's me. I am Superman." Just not a very healthy-looking one.

It's going to be tough to get used to such an unusual character in a Superman costume, but I suppose one could say the same for all of the new

characters.

The final character, who appears in Superman: The Man of Steel, is the only one with a known identity before becoming a new Superman. He's John Henry Irons, a black steelworker. His connection to Superman is that Supes saved his life shortly before he was killed. Disgusted by the crime and violence in his neighborhood, Irons, a former weapons designer, creates a suit of armor to fight the inner-city crime he despises. He wears a shiny suit of metal with a gleaming "S" riveted on the chest. A billowing red cape and steel sledgehammer accentuate the ensemble. He can project metal rivets from wrist guns, and he can fly. Lex Luthor has shown interest in being close friends. Or, as Luthor tells his lackey Happersen, "... I want to talk to him ... it might be helpful to finally have a Man of Steel in my pocket." Of course, having Lex Luthor wanting to be your buddy is not a good thing.

While Irons might not have a direct link to the original Superman like the other characters (Or does he? A weird bolt of energy passes between the two during a flashback sequence on page 8 of *Man of Steel* #22), he has so far proven himself to be the most honorable of the four and the one most likely to carry on Superman's legacy the way Superman himself would have wanted.

Like former Superman writer/artist John Byrne (see interview elsewhere in this issue), I wonder what DC is up to with these new Supermen. It goes without saying that the original Superman will be back sometime in the near future. What will then happen to these characters? If each achieves popularity in their own right, will they receive new series devoted to them in addition to the regular Superman titles? That would be a lot of Supermen running around the DC Universe. That was one of the main reasons for the Crisis in the DC Universe, the series that, among other things, killed off every being from Krypton except Superman, in order to streamline DC and re-establish Superman's uniqueness. DC has slowly brought back characters like Supergirl (although she's not a Kryptonian now), but I don't think it would be wise to have five different Supermans running around. So much then for Superman's uniqueness.

A final thought on these new characters: the impact they all have on Lois Lane. Lois has really gone through hell lately. First she has to deal

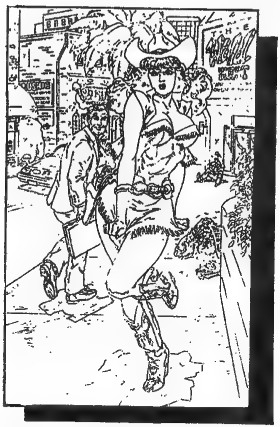
with the death of Superman, who she was engaged to marry at the time. Then, she can't tell anyone that Superman was Clark Kent, and has to put up with everyone telling her about the missing Clark; "maybe he'll turn up alive in the wreckage somewhere." On top of everything else, four new guys turn up and claim to be her dead fiancee, only none of them remember their engagement (just like a man, huh?). The vigilante tells her, "There is no Clark Kent, there is only Superman." The kid takes a look at her and says, "Wow! My death really aged you, huh, Lois?" The cyborg's memories are almost totally wiped. If she doesn't have a nervous breakdown soon, she must be the strongest woman on the face of the earth.

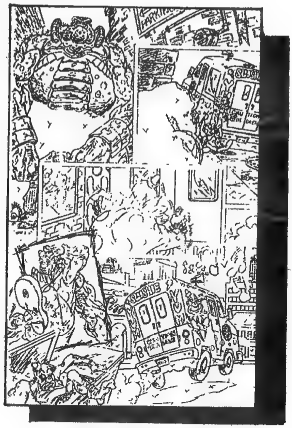
All of these books are ripe with possibilities, and if past events are any indication, the creators of each title will explore the four new characters to the fullest of their abilities. The Reign of the Supermen is just starting, and I'll be following each book closely to see what the future holds.

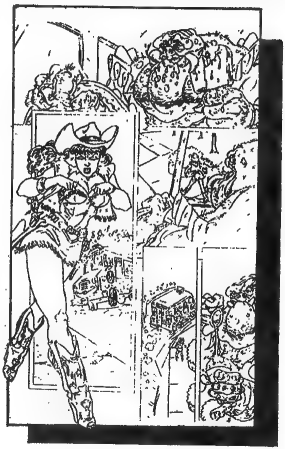
PREVIEW

BUCKAROO BETTY

by Beau Smith and Brad Gorby
Published by AmeriComics







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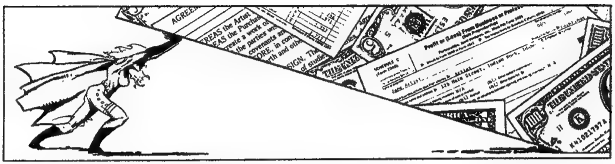
ULTRAVERSE
Mike W. Barr • Terry Dodson
Illustration by Hoang Nguyen
July '93



Getting Into The BUSINESS Of Comics

by Lurene Haines

Part 5: Approaching Potential Employers:
Step Three - The Personal Interview

Last issue I gave a short review of this series so far, with brief descriptions of the sections covered, and a look at what's to come. This month, we continue the series with the third step in approaching potential employers - the personal interview.

Many newcomers believe that the personal interview is a critical step in finding work in the comic industry. Many scrape together their limited funds for a trip to one of the big publishers in the hopes that a personal interview will secure them that elusive comic work. But, our industry operates slightly different that most other career fields. Many professionals never even meet their editors or publishers, but that doesn't stop them from lining up new projects. Business is primarily conducted via mail, courier, and fax machines. If you have success getting work through mail samples and convention contacts, then save your funds, and invest them in improved work materials and business equipment.

That's not to say that a personal interview won't make a difference. On the contrary, sometimes being in the right place at exactly the right time can mean the difference between obscurity and employment. If you are a committed, businesslike individual, follow the correct procedures for securing an interview, and have the work skills necessary for getting the job done, the personal interview can be a valuable tool.

But always keep in mind. There's no such thing as overnight success. That's a long road of hard, dedicated work, and the personal interview is just one small section of the pavement. Your first steps should be in the form of preparing your portfolio and samples, attend some conventions to familiarize yourself with the industry and how business is conducted, and take the time to regularly submit samples of your work by mail. If after all that you still decide that an interview could be of help to you, then there are several steps you can take to ensure some success.

How to Get a Personal Interview

I hear the rustle of people moving to the edge of their seats, as I broach this topic. I'm sorry, though, there is no simple little trick or piece of advice that will secure you this elusive prize. To gain a personal interview, you must do a lot of hard work, plenty of preparation, and invest much time and energy.

Your best shot at an interview will manifest itself if you've followed the recommended steps of preparing a professional portfolio, attending conventions to make professional contacts, and sending out samples by mail.

One or all these techniques can open up the opportunity to approach a particular editor or publisher, at their offices - sometimes even at their request. However, this route may not appeal to everyone. If you think you have enough talent and business savvy, and you are fortunate enough to be conveniently located near the publisher you are targeting, then you probably could take advantage of the interview process without the preliminary steps I've recommended. Keep in mind, though, the preparation of a professional portfolio is very critical to a personal interview. Also, making connections in person at conventions, and through mail submissions, can establish a friendlier, more familiar and relaxed interview setting.

Most publishers have regularly scheduled interview/portfolio-review days and

times. If you wish to pursue an interview uninvited, it is in your best interest to call ahead and find out when these activities are scheduled. If possible, you should always make an appointment. This is an indicator of your professionalism. To simply show up at the publisher's office requesting (or worse yet, demanding) a personal interview is the ultimate in rudeness and inconsiderate business practices. It will do nothing but damage your newly developing career, and alienate you with that particular company.

Assuming you've followed all the steps necessary to reach your goal of a personal interview, and provided you have the means to reach the publisher's office in person, there are a number of things you should consider to ensure you make a good impression, including good preparation, personal presentation and proper interview etiquette.

Getting Ready For Your Interview

First off, it's important to prepare properly for your interview. This preparation takes a variety of forms. Things to consider include familiarity with the company and their published works, the segment of the market they tend to target, their use of new talent, the editorial staff and their credits, and how your work will fit into their publishing line.

Knowing the Company

As I suggested in Part One of this series, it is in your best professional interest to familiarize yourself with the comic industry, and the publishers of which it's composed. If you want to create the product, in this case comics, then you should be familiar with the product, how it's produced and by whom.

There is a broad degree of variety in the comic industry, both in the subject matter and the style of the product. There are more than 120 different actively publishing companies, and 25-30 of those are firmly established and well-known companies. Within that range of publishers, there is a massive degree of diversity. Although many newcomers frequently associate comics with superheroes, subject matter also includes horror, cutting edge/alternative, movie-licensed characters, westerns, war stories, classic literature, novel adaptations, funny animals, erotica, and an infinite number of combinations and permutations of these and other subjects. You will also find many different types of comics, including the regular series, limited series, one-shots, graphic novels, illustrated story-albums, anthologies, collected works, and experimental formats.

There are as many *styles* of comics as there are subjects and types. There are color comics - flat-coded, painted and computer-colored - and there are black and white comics. Artwork and writing can be mainstream, design oriented, stylistic, impressionistic cartoony or even caricaturistic. And within each publishing house, within each comic line, and within each series or graphic novel, any and all these characteristics can change.

In any given month, there is an average of about 2,500 different comic and comic-related products solicited for sale. This includes comics, books, magazines, cards, toys, games, posters, prints, and T-shirts, to name a few. Seem overwhelming? Well it is, not just for you as an eager newcomer, but even for the professionals currently working in the industry. Therefore it is important that you do two things in preparation for a personal interview.

1) Familiarize yourself with the products produced by the company interviewing you. This does *not* mean you should learn the names of every book or character the company produces so you can try to impress your interviewer by reciting that information. It means to familiarize yourself with the books they are promoting heavily, any works that have produced accolades or attention for the company, and most important, books on which you would be interested in working.

I cannot emphasize this point enough - if you are set on working on a particular book you must be familiar with the character, their background and history, and what material is currently being published on that character. It is not in your best interest to show up at the interview, state "I really want to work on Batman, and I've got this totally cool idea . . . " and then have the interviewer look at you astounded, and tell you "We just did that story two months ago! Don't you read the book?" This would be bad. Very bad.

Learn about the characters, books and company that you are pursuing. Knowledge can be a very powerful tool, and good preparation shows your interviewer that you are a

ProFiles

Professional: Mike Carlin, Editor, D.C. Comics
Credits Include: Editor of the *Superman* books, co-writer of the *Superboy* T.V. series, previously a writer and editor for Marvel Comics
Current Projects: The continuing series on the *Death Of Superman*
Question: Do you think a personal interview is important for an aspiring comic professional, and what advice would you offer to an interview candidate?

Nope, I don't think it's important. Speaking from my own experience, and from just observing, the work should speak for itself. Because we don't have to work in the same room together, and because we don't spend hours and hours and hours together, I don't think the personal interview is that important. I think if you can draw or write well, and on a timely basis, that is more important that if I get along with you on a day-to-day basis. Obviously we have to get along when it comes to the work, but with the fax and Fedex, I don't think the personal interview is critical. I've worked with guys for years who I've never met, and I'm happy with the work and we have a good relationship over the phone. On the other hand, if I'm interviewing for an assistant editor, or somebody I have to live with, the interview is essential. And if a person shows up for an interview on time, that's a possible indicator that they can do their work on time, but still, the interview isn't essential.

My main advice, and my biggest pet peeve, is people showing up without an appointment. You'd be surprised how many people just show up, stick their head in, and say "Hi, I'm Joe Blow. Do you have a minute to look at my stuff?" That's not good. It forces me to be the bad guy by not having the time to see them. I do see a lot of people. I see almost everybody who calls for an appointment, but this past year with *The Death Of Superman* stuff going on it's been a harder.

My other advice to creators is don't put down other people's work. *You're* being interviewed. If you thing your work is better than someone else's, or your mother told you that, it may be. But you're talking about people you don't know and also aspects of the work you don't know. For example, even if Don Perlin is not your favorite artist, people use him because he does tell a story clearly, *and* he is reliable, *and* he is a nice guy. People can build careers on that sort of stuff. So don't come in and say, "I'm better than so-and-so," because chances are you're not. And you make a bad impression.

professional ready to work.

2) Don't be a geek.

Sorry to be so harsh in my terminology, but there are certain behaviors that are completely unacceptable for an aspiring pro. Sure, it's exciting and wonderful that you finally scored a personal interview. Hey, it could mean they think you've got some real potential. But now, it's time to act like a professional. ***Do not*** recite every tidbit of trivia you know about the company, it's employees, creators or books. And most important, don't go on about other publishers and their works - that's their competitors, and they really don't care what you think about them. They're only interested in your knowledge about *their* company. Really.

Don't gush and fawn. If you want to seem like a professional, then act like one. Sure, it's okay to be excited and enthusiastic. Many publishers are looking for that fresh outlook and new blood. They don't all want jaded cynics, they sometimes want open idealists. But if you can't stop going on about how faint you are from excitement, or that you ". . . can't believe you're in the same room with the 'famous editor/writer/artist' of a book you've been reading since you were born . . .," then you're going to lose out on a valuable opportunity - you won't even be considered for hiring, because they won't be convinced that you're serious about a professional career.

Just try to keep in mind that it's a *job interview*. Treat it like any other important job interview, and you'll have much greater chance of success.

Their Target Market

It's also important to understand which segment of the market the company targets. If they are focusing on kids, then you will have to be aware that your creative product must be geared for that audience. If they are interested in the general mainstream audience, then it's unlikely they will be interested in your erotica samples. Knowing their product and target market will ensure you have a better chance of being considered for hiring.

Use of New Talent

Some companies make it a policy to limit new unproven talent. Other companies make it a policy to regularly hire new unproven talent. It's in your best interest, and to prevent disappointment, to check out the published work of your target company to see where they may stand on hiring newcomers.

If you regularly see new, unknown names, there's a good chance that the company likes to search out talented newcomers to supplement their staff of established, name professionals. These companies are frequently more willing to give you a shot. Other companies, who may operate on a tighter budget, tend to focus on established professionals, because of the reduced risk of poor sales. This doesn't mean they won't consider new talent. It simply means your chances of being hired may not be quite as good.

When arranging for a personal interview - perhaps at the time you ask about interview/portfolio-review days - you should look into their policy of using new talent. This will help provide you with some insight and guidance about whom you should aggressively approach, and who may require some extra groundwork and preparation.

The Editorial Staff and Their Credits

It is understood, that most people appreciate recognition for their work. Consequently, it doesn't hurt to familiarize yourself with the credits and credentials of the person who will be interviewing you. If it is a creator or editor with whose work you are already familiar, great! If their name is less familiar to you, then do a bit of research at your local comic shop, and find out what books they've been involved with, and whether they have any awards or special accolades to their credit. You may discover things about your interviewer that will provide you with some common ground, or give you a bit of extra confidence for your interview.

This can also be a useful technique, if the interviewer is involved with any books on which you are interested in working. Your familiarity with material they are regularly involved with will impress upon them both your professional knowledge of the industry and your interest in their work, and may help you establish you as a professional worth considering for future projects.

How Your Work Fits the Company Line

If you tend to work very stylistically - that is non-traditional comic art/writing - then you should be aware of what types of work the

ProFiles

Professional: Kelley Jones, comic book artist
Credits Include: *Batman: Red Rain*, D.C. Comics; *Aliens:Hive*, Dark Horse Comics
Current Projects: *Dark Joker* (graphic novel), D.C. Comics, *Batman Vs. Lobo*, D.C. Comics; *Batman: Bloodstorm (Red Rain II)*, D.C. Comics
Question: Do you think the personal interview is a critical step in acquiring work as a comic professional, and what advice would you offer to an interview candidate?

No, not really. I never met anybody I ever worked for personally, and it really comes down to the strength of your work. If you're good, they'll publish you. The only time a personal interview or meeting the person is important, is after you're already working. At that point, your work speaks for itself, and it's just a question of whether you can get along and get it done. It's really the quality of your work that matters.

I haven't really had any interviews, per se, but I have had to go in and make my pitch for work. But I have two pieces of advice; one is don't come off like a flake - and in that case it helps if you aren't one. Second, don't cop an attitude - keep in mind we're all very replaceable. I always try to keep in mind when I'm working that there's probably a good hundred people better than me. Humility is important. Realize to that drawing well isn't everything. You have to be able to think well, too. The two go together.

My advice would be to go in there with your stuff, and if they start nitpicking it, don't have an answer for everything. Listen to what they have to say. If it's someone who's experienced, and who's work you respect, then pay close attention. If it's someone who you're not that crazy about, well just keep in mind who's talking. That's the big reason I like working with Doug Moench. He's someone who's told stories for so long he knows exactly what he's doing, and he's always fresh. So if he says something isn't quite right or doesn't work, I say, "How do I make it better?"

company that interviews you produces. If they publish standard, mainstream superheroes, exclusively, then it is unlikely your alternative work will be of interest to them. Likewise, if you don't even have any *interest* in standard superhero material, then there's no real reason to interview with the company.

To summarize, familiarize yourself with the company and their product, be aware of what segment of the reading market they are targeting with their work, learn about their use of new talent and whether there will be a place for you, the newcomer, in their ranks. Learn a bit about the editorial staff and their own accomplishments and credits, and make sure you understand how, and if, your work will fit into the company line.

Personal Presentation

At last, you have finished researching your interviewer and the company. Your portfolio, samples, and business card are organized. You're ready to go, right? Wrong. There's more. Although for some of you, this section may seem redundant - possibly even insulting - for others, this section may enlighten, and make the difference between being seriously considered a professional, and never being interviewed again.

Personal presentation. What does it mean? It means personal hygiene, the way you dress, your mannerisms and how you speak. I'm not here to provide you with charm school, but what I do want you to consider are a few important aspects of personal presentation that are considered by *all* interviewers when they sit down with a new job candidate.

Personal Hygiene - Although it may sound simplistic and biased, your personal hygiene will significantly influence the outcome of your interview. Clean, combed hair, brushed teeth, bathing, and deodorant are essentials. Sorry to get personal, but these are frequently mentioned points of contention with many hiring professionals. If your interviewer is badly distracted by your powerful body odor, your interview will be hurried, and leave a markedly unpleasant impression despite your overwhelming talents. Take the time prior to leaving for your interview to ensure that you've been meticulous about your personal appearance and cleanliness.

The Way You Dress - This goes hand in hand with personal hygiene. There's no point in spending undue time cleaning yourself up if you plan to dress in the same dirty clothes you've worn for the past week. Clean clothes are also an essential part of personal hygiene.

The type of clothes you wear isn't quite as important for a freelancer interviewing for work, as it might be for an office worker. But to make a good impression, a neat, clean appearance is essential. Don't wear clothes that are in disrepair, or badly worn out just because they're your favorite, or have always been lucky. You'll just make a bad impression. On the other hand, a freelancer who shows up in a tux and tails will make just as bad an impression. Dress appropriately, neatly and businesslike. Casual is okay, but this doesn't mean sloppy jeans and a faded, dirty T-shirt.

Oh, and don't show up for an interview with Company A, wearing clothing sporting the logo of Company B! If you insist on wearing logo-covered clothing, make sure it's Company A's!

Your Manners - Good manners don't come naturally to everyone, but they should. Respect, consideration and courtesy are the foundation of good business relations. Be polite - not just with the interviewer, but with the secretary, the receptionist, and any other individuals you meet. Practice good manners in your day to day life, and it will come naturally in your interview. Some examples of what I mean by good manners:

- call ahead to arrange your interview, don't just show up and expect to be seen.

- leave your full name and contact information when you make your appointment.

- learn and use the names of the secretary/receptionist and your interviewer, but err toward *formality* (Ms. Bastienne, Mr. Reed) rather than *familiarity*.

- be punctual. Show up a few minutes before your appointment time, and politely notify the secretary/receptionist that you have arrived. This responsible behavior is one indication that you can handle deadlines and assignments.

- sit quietly and patiently until you are called. Your politeness will cultivate a professional response.

- make eye contact and shake hands

firmly. When you are met by your interviewer, thank them for seeing you, and be open and friendly. In doing so you will help set the tone of the interview and make a positive impression.

- when asked, state clearly and concisely what you believe the purpose of the interview to be, and what your goal is.

- answer questions politely, honestly, openly and with good humor (that doesn't mean crack jokes!)

- don't interrupt the interviewer, don't drone on incessantly about unrelated personal matters/thoughts, and do listen to what is said.

- at the end of the interview, despite the perceived outcome, thank your interviewer for their time. Also thank the secretary/receptionist as you leave.

In all exchanges, keep in mind how you would feel if your positions were reversed, and imagine the manner in which you would want to be spoken to - let good sense and common courtesy dictate your manners.

The Way You Speak - This is closely linked with your manners, but is important enough to merit mention on it's own. The way you speak can influence the behavior of those around you. Use proper English, avoid slang, expletives and fashionable terminology. Make your statements and questions clear and concise, and you will avoid confusion and misunderstandings. Don't try to be 'cool', just try to be sincere, polite and enthusiastic. And be yourself; a contrived personality is transparent, irritating, and could negatively affect the outcome of your interview.

Interview Etiquette

Interview etiquette is closely related to good manners, -and the one rarely occurs without the other. By interview etiquette, I refer to the way in which you conduct yourself in the interview - what behaviors are acceptable and expected, and which will ruin your chances of gaining employment.

In the previous section on manners, I listed some items that also fall under the heading of interview etiquette. These include calling ahead to arrange the time, leaving your full name and contact information, arriving punctually, waiting patiently until called, being friendly, open and polite, listening carefully, stating your goals clearly, answering questions honestly and in a friendly manner, sticking to the interview subject (don't digress into personal areas), and thanking your interviewer for their time, whatever the perceived outcome of the interview.

In addition to these aspects of interview etiquette, here is a list of Do's and Don'ts you should familiarize yourself with before you go in.

· **Don't** compare your interviewer, their company, or any of their published work to their competitor(s). Focus on *them* - they're the one interviewing you!

· **Don't** ever criticize another creator's work. You're there to be interviewed, not provide a critique. This is guaranteed to make a very bad impression.

· **Don't** think for one second that your "massive talent" will carry your lack of professional organization because it won't!

· **Don't** prepare a list of requests or demands - this will only guarantee you *won't* be hired.

· **Don't** memorize the company's complete published works and then recite them to your interviewer.

· **Don't** go in with a negative, arrogant or know-it-all attitude - it's a job interview. You *need* to make a good impression.

· **Do** organize your portfolio in a professional and easy-to-read manner.

· **Do** put together a sample package you can leave with your interviewer, including a business card.

· **Do** list the types of characters and/or books on which you'd like to work, and be prepared to describe this to the interviewer.

· **Do** prepare yourself to accept other material/assignments if they're offered - after all, you have to start somewhere!

· **Do** go in with a positive, friendly and enthusiastic outlook. It's a job interview, you *need* to make a good impression.

Getting It Together

As you can see, the personal interview can be a useful, if not always necessary, tool on the road to becoming a comic professional. Although it can help secure work, other avenues such as portfolio revues, convention contacts

and mail submissions can be more efficient. However, when deciding to pursue a personal interview it is important to consider some important guidelines.

You should prepare for your interview by ensuring that you have an appointment. Don't just surprise them, or make an unwanted, unannounced visit. You should familiarize yourself with the company and their work, what types of product they produce, which markets they target, how and if they use new talents, how your work might fit in with the company publications, and the people who make up the editorial staff, and the background and credits of your interviewer.

Make sure your personal appearance is neat and clean, that your manner is polite and courteous, and that you speak well and avoid slang or foul language. Don't behave like a flake, and you won't be treated like one. Also, make sure you understand the structure of an interview, and the types of behavior that are appropriate; punctuality, politeness, courtesy, open and honest answers, and listening.

Next time we will cover the final step in Approaching Potential Employers: Feedback and Critiques. I will cover what these involve, how to handle them, how to apply this new information, how it ties with what we've covered so far.

Meanwhile, if you follow these guidelines, in addition to the other steps we have discussed for preparing yourself as a professional, you will find yourself comfortably involved in Getting Into The Business Of Comics.

If you have questions about topics covered in this column, please feel free to write. I will try to address your questions in the column or by a personal note. Send your letters to **Lurene Haines, c/o Arena Magazine, 264 main St., Florence, KY 41042.**

The Interview Check List

Here is a summarized check list of important points to remember.

✓ Always, always, always arrange an interview appointment. DO NOT just 'show up' and expect to be well received.

✓ Familiarize yourself with the products produced by the company interviewing you, their target market, and how they handle new talent.

✓ Don't be a geek - behave like a professional and you'll be treated like one.

✓ Make sure you are meticulous in your personal appearance. Good personal hygiene, neat and clean clothing, nice manners and being well-spoken can greatly influence the outcome of the interview.

✓ Be punctual.

✓ Make eye contact and shake hands firmly. Be open and friendly. In doing so you will help set the tone of the interview and make a positive impression.

✓ Answer questions politely, honestly, openly and with good humor

✓ Don't interrupt the interviewer, don't drone on incessantly about unrelated personal matters/thoughts, and do listen to what is said.

✓ Never, ever criticize another creators work.

✓ Don't compare your interviewer, their company, or any of their published work to their competitor(s).

✓ Organize your portfolio in a professional and easy-to-read manner and put together a sample package you can leave with your interviewer, including a business card.

✓ Prepare yourself to accept other material/assignments if they're offered - you have to start somewhere!

✓ Go in with a positive, friendly and enthusiastic outlook, not a negative, arrogant or know-it-all attitude. It's a job interview, you *need* to make a good impression.

A Conversation With ...Sky Comics

Part 2

Interview by Dan Souder

(continued from last issue)

This month, in part two of this chat session, we expound in greater detail with Bob Hickey and Joe Martin, publisher and editor of Sky Comics, respectively.

Dan Souder: *Well, it looks like you guys have big plans for this fall. You're doing* ***Seeker, Blood & Roses, Dead Kid, Morgana X, Ashley Dust*** *and* ***Tempered Steele****. Most of these characters are female. Any reason?*

Bob Hickey: Because there's more than enough male heroes out there.

Joe Martin: Yeah. Women are highly underrated by the industry as a source of heroism. This is the '90s and the "damsel in distress" routine is a little bit harder to take seriously. Women are fighting for themselves, and more women are reading comics. It's easier for them to identify with a character of the same gender and it's a true test of our skills. A lot of people complain about female heroines in comics that, "Well, he's just writing a guy with breasts!" You know what I mean?

BH: But that's really kind of a ridiculous remark. I agree with Tom and Mary (Bierbaum). They told me once that there are all types of men and women with every kind of personality imaginable. Who's to say a woman wouldn't act a certain way? That's just kind of goofy to say, "Well, a woman wouldn't act that way" just because you don't think they would because they will.

JM: I'm just saying that most women in comics are written with the same tough "guy" mentality. It's like it wouldn't really matter if the character were a guy or a girl. I'm not saying that in *Seeker* I'm going to delve deep into the female psyche, but I'm hoping that the readers won't ever question that she's not a she.

DS: *Since your early publishing ventures, I've noticed the look of the artwork and its sleekness has increased dramatically in leaps and bounds. What change has brought that about?*

BH: Practice. That, and we get around. Before, we were limited in what we could do because of time constraints and because Joe and I were doing practically everything to keep the business running smoothly.

JM: Uh, we still do that.

BH: Yeah, you're right. If anything, we've got more responsibilities. But by being involved in the industry, we've met people who we wanted to work with and who are very good at what they do. And who have been good enough to put up with us [chuckles].

JM: The artwork has improved because we want to offer stuff that is as good or better than any book you could pick up from Marvel or Image. And you'll find that the storytelling is just as good, if not better, also. Our titles are good comics.

BH: Great comics! And that's the way it should be.

DS: *Okay. With all the new titles being released from Sky, which are going to be ongoing and which are miniseries?*

JM: All of them are ongoing miniseries.

BH: A regular ongoing series from an unknown publisher is a high risk. By the time you get orders for issue four or five, they're bound to be rather low and that can kill your continuity. It can kill the book. So, we're taking the "DC *Lobo* Approach" -- lots of

number ones and miniseries.

JM: Retailers will order number ones, obviously, and they don't mind putting the money down for a one-shot as opposed to the first issue of a 24-issue epic saga! If a series only runs two or three issues, then chances are readers may get to read the whole story from beginning to end. I think that's how you secure a readership. Once you have that, and can sell eight to twelve thousand copies automatically, then there's a good possibility that an ongoing series may thrive. That's what we're aiming for in the long run -- or at least I am.

BH: No, I think you're right.

JM: Whoa, and he said it in print [laughs]!

DS: *[Laughs] Now, he's in trouble! So, speaking of the upgrade in art, who are these guys?*

BH: I'm excited about working with Brad (Gorby). His art is packed with action...

JM: And backgrounds.

BH: [Laughs] Yeah! The guy draws a background in every panel! It's an inker's nightmare! But, you just can't get over the incredible detail...

JM: And the babes.

DS: *Hey! Sexist remark! That's really why you guys have all those females!*

JM: You figured us out [Laughs].

BH: Let's get back to Brad. His art is awesome. If you readers out there miss this book, you're missing some of the best work in comics today.

DS: *Bold statement.*

JM: He's a bold guy.

DS: *[Laughs] Okay, what else?*

JM: I've got two guys working on *Seeker* at the moment on two different stories. Willie Peppers, after years of drawing like John

Byrne, has evolved a very Image-like style. The first issue of *Seeker*, called "Vengeance", is still very Byrne-like but now he's working on *Seeker: Faith & Corruption* and the art is even more stunning. It's like a melding of Byrne and Marc Silvestri. Then there's Tyler Bishop. He's got an excellent style that I just couldn't pass up on him illustrating this one story idea I had. It's called *Seeker: The Dark Night* [ha ha]. Tyler's work looks like Steve Rude figures set in a *Cerebus the Aardvark* background.

DS: *That sounds cool.*

JM: I'm still awaiting pages but I think it will be awesome!

BH: Another excellent artist working on *Tempered Steele* is Don Hillsman. His work is so polished and professional. He's working on the first issue and his line work is solid. Every line he places, you know that he meant for it to be there. Let's see, who does his art remind you of?

JM: I think he sort of has a style all his own. He's done work for Malibu on the forthcoming *Streetfighter* and, if I may be so bold, his stuff for us is even better.

BH: I think so, too.

DS: *You have some pros doing covers for you, too, right?*

BH: We've got Lurene (*Green Arrow*) Haines painting some *Blood & Roses* covers, Daerick (*Necroscope*) Gross is painting a couple of *Blood & Roses* covers and a *Seeker* cover...

JM: And Franchesco (*Green Lantern Corps Quarterly*) is doing a *Seeker* cover. They're all beautiful. If you've seen Daerick's painting, it's incredibly intricate. His flesh-tones, his fabrics and his leathers are on par with any of the best painters out there. The work he did on *Vampire Lestat* and *Necroscope* only begin to touch the surface of what he's doing now.

BH: Not so much a proven professional but still a great painter is Allen Freeman. He's one of the creators of *Morgana X* and his airbrush work is beautiful.

JM: Hey, everybody working with Sky is doing top notch work. That's what it comes down to. We're all doing our very best, even the guys doing covers -- it's their best work to date.

Stay tuned for Part 3 of our conversation with the "Sky guys" next month in Arena #12.

PREVIEW

NIGHTLINGER

by Steven Jones and Aldin Baroza
Published by Caliber Press

Brit Bits

News and gossip from the land of Iraqgate!

As news fills through concerning possible British government involvement in the sale of arms to Iraq prior to the gulf war, the British comics community is itself having a field day as rumors fly fast and furiously over the probable demise of every publisher currently issuing a tax return form. But hey, as the saying goes: it's not over until the Fat Lady sings...

Yes, Atomeka, Tundra's British arm has again moved offices, shedding staff along the way, but with a bunch of titles due featuring the work of fan-favorite Simon Bisley, the expected sales should prove a turning point for them.

One such Bisley drawn book is *Death Dealer*, based on the Frank Frazetta character and written by Ian Edginton (*Aliens: Rogue*) who commented, "What I'm trying to do is give it a twist: there's magic and realism, flying ships and gods, gunpowder and muskets."

Arena #9 reported on the *Mindbenders* anthology, but even creators are asking when it'll be published. In a series of phone calls with Black Tower's Terry Hooper it transpired not all was plain sailing after all. The Eastern European connection got blown to pieces quite literally, when the printing factory got bombed in civil war-torn Georgia. Following this the Japanese affiliation went sour. Hooper will now act as packager/ editor of European material for America's Blackbird Comics, with the promised Black Tower books possibly being published earlier than was initially announced.

Jeff Anderson and Terry Murray's follow-up to *The Shadow's Edge* is *The Cutting Edge*, from Lion Books. Anderson's recent art has been gathering him a new army of fans, and there are hints that various publishers want him to do biblical adaptations; how interesting then that certain English religious book shops refused to place *The Shadow's Edge* on their shelves, but were more than happy to order it if someone paid up front. Hypocrisy lives! Penguin may be out of the game, but Harper Collings has decided to publish 24 graphic novels over the next two years!

Kak, *Gag*, and *Spit* were humor anthologies that came and went without too many people losing sleep. However there were a few sad eyes when national TV revealed the demise of fictional soccer player/manager Roy Race's weekly comic *Roy of the Rovers*.

After being brought out by Gutenburghus, Fleetway Editions looked to be treading water for far too long, and Marvel UK's recent successes are thought to have caught many employees by surprise, but by all accounts battle plans have been drawn, and we're due for a resurgence from the company.

John Tomlinson has officially become Assistant Editor to Richard Burton on *2000 AD*, moving Alan MacKenzie up to Commissioning Editor. The debut of new strips in the spring caused positive reader reactions, and the word is that it's nothing compared to what's due this summer.

Both *2000 AD* and *The Judge Dredd Megazine* are working towards establishing a tight continuity on *Judge Dredd* for which Fleetway will have final quality approval when the title begins U.S. publication from DC.

On a rather different level of Fleetway entertainment, but with high sales expected nonetheless, Richard Burton is editing Fleetway's *Sonic the Hedgehog* comic. An annual is already underway, and contributors include Richard Elson and Alan MacKenzie.

Is Dark Horse International playing it safe with their reprint titles such as *Aliens, Star Wars,* and *Dracula*? That depends; sure it's cost effective, but different cultures have different desires and requirements... as do parents! As if in anticipation of this, Editor Dick Hansom, commenting on *Total Carnage* (featuring *Batman Vs. Predator, Army of Darkness, Grendel,* and *The Mask*, plus action-movie news) said, "We anticipate there may be a comeback due to the level of violence in the comic; but the stories will only reflect what is already widely available on video and in computer games. The majority of our readers are over 16 and there's certainly nothing in the comic that you wouldn't find in a '15' rated movie."

This month Dark Horse International launch *Manga Mania*, a monthly 128-page package including *Godzilla, Akira,* and *Appleseed.* With *Akira* due on TV soon, and the video having sold 60,000 copies the company have another safe bet on their hands, but what about original material? Well, there are these rumors of an anthology including all new British material...; but for now it's work such as *Sacrifice* by Peter Milligan and Paul Johnson that's serialized here first in *Aliens* before coming out in collected form from the parent company.

The aforementioned Johnson has a busy schedule ahead of him. He'll be illustrating *The Fires of Alchemy*, a twelve issue series written by Dick (*Black Orchid*) Foreman for DC's Vertigo imprint, and *Children of the Voyager* written by Nick Abadzis for Marvel UK's new Frontier imprint.

Frontier reminds me of the early Epic line; and other titles include *Immortalis* by Nick Vince and Mark Buckingham (see Brit Bits in *Arena #8*), *Dances with Demons* by Simon (*James Bond*) Jowett and Charlie (*Judge Dredd Megazine*), plus *Bloodseed* by Editor-In-Chief Paul Neary and artist Liam (*Death's Head II*) Sharp. They're set to ship this month alongside the four-number mini-series *Battletide* and *Killpower: The Early Years*, and the John Royle illustrated two-number series *Death's Head II & Die-Cut.*

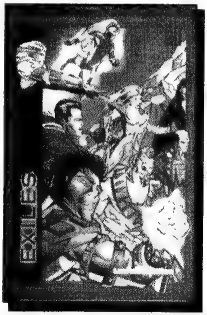
If you've been wondering about the multiple art credits on recent Marvel UK books, I'm told that artists are working in-house to avoid falling behind on deadlines. I have this curious feeling they're working in the basement where I once saw an individual (who will remain nameless) dive chest-first across a polished 20-foot long boardroom table... those were the days!

The first issue of *Man-Bat* by Jamie Delano and John Bolton is now not due until December, which is a great shame because it's being tipped to sell like hot cakes over here.

(c) Paul H. Birch

Trading Card News

Ultraverse Comic Cards



SkyBox recently signed an exclusive, multi-year licensing agreement with Malibu Comics to produce trading cards featuring characters from the Malibu Comics line. The first of these to be produced – *Ultraverse Comic Cards* -- will examine the heroes, villains, teams, and culture of the Ultraverse, Malibu's all-new superhero imprint.

According to SkyBox, this "100-card set will provide a bible of biographical and other information from the editors at Malibu Comics critical to understanding the past, present, and future of the Ultraverse."

A bonus set of nine Ultraverse rookies -- featuring characters not scheduled for a comic book debut until later in the year -- will be randomly inserted in a limited number of *Ultraverse Comic Card* foil packages. Additionally, four Ultraverse rookie cards will sport foil-stamping, while two other bonus cards will feature original artwork that has been "transferred...with a never before seen process."

Look for *Ultraverse Comic Card* prototypes in the following Ultraverse titles, all scheduled for July shipping: *Mantra #1, Freex #1, Hardcase #2, The Strangers #2,* and *Prime #2.*

Remember "The Emperor's New Clothes?"

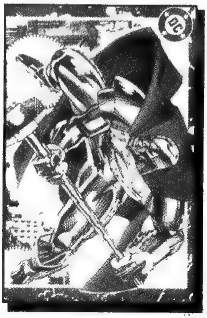
The adult card trend continues to boom, with several new products solicited in this month's catalog. New companies are appearing more slowly, but veteran favorites are gaining strength. Hot Shots' much anticipated *1993 Emperor's Collection* has just been released, and the adult card manufacturer has some exciting plans for its Silver Sponsorship of the Retailer's Seminar. Also, keep looking for more new releases in the next few months.

A Pog Upon Thee

Pogs are definitely coming! Several manufacturers are hoping to capture a share of this potential growing market. Comic Images should be soliciting for it ComiCaps in next month's *Previews*, with its debut product to be released in August. Also, keep an eye out for Pro-Sport Specialties to release some sort of milk cap product in conjuction with its "Peanuts" line. Of course, by now you've seen SkyCaps from SkyBox with more releases on the way.

SkyBox News

Bloodlines Preview Cards



The *DC Bloodlines* card, includes artwork and a brief description of each of the four new beings claiming to be Superman in the DC Universe. This card serves as a unique prototype card for the *DC Bloodlines* card series scheduled for release by SkyBox this June, as it utilizes that card series' innovative and colorful design concept.

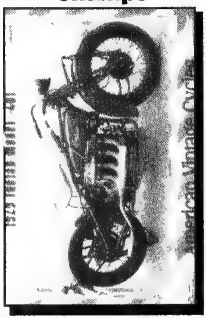
These four Supermen represent the first four of more than 20 new characters who will be introduced to the DC Universe over the next few months and take part in the eagerly-anticipated Bloodlines story, which will run through 23 DC Annuals from May until October. These New Blood characters will then join the most powerful DC Super Heroes in an effort to defeat a group of extra-terrestrial parasites which have invaded the earth in a two-issue

limited series called *Bloodbath*.

The *DC Bloodlines* comic card line will provide an 81-card artistic and editorial summary of this incredible *Bloodlines* storyline, including 18 New Blood ("rookie") cards featuring new Super Heroes and Super Villains to be introduced in the annual series and seven Parasite cards. *DC Bloodlines Trading Cards* will feature all new, all original artwork created exclusively for this set by the top artists at DC Comics.

Finally, five bonus cards will be randomly inserted in the eight-card packs of *DC Bloodlines Trading Cards*, including four super-premium, foil-embossed cards of the "new" Supermen, and one very limited bonus Superman Exchange Card. Similar to the incredibly successful 1992 NBA Draft Lottery Pick Exchange Card randomly inserted in packs of 1992-1993 NBA HOOPS Series I, the bonus Superman Exchange Card may be exchanged for the first card of the real Superman, when the mystery surrounding the demise of The Man of Steel in last year's Doomsday series is finally resolved.

Agreement With Champs



SkyBox International Inc. and Champs Marketing, Inc., announced the signing of an agreement today that will make SkyBox the exclusive distributor in the United States and Canada for *American Vintage Cycles Series II* Trading Cards.

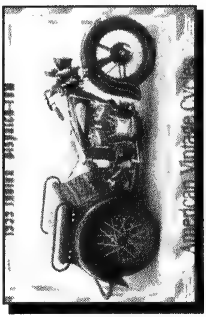
"SkyBox is the recognized leader in the entertainment card market," said Jerry Ruttenbur, SkyBox Senior Vice President of Sales, in making the announcement, "and as such we actively seek out top quality licensed products for distribution. In this particular case, Champs has a license with the American Motorcyclist Association and an excellent track record for this type of product, so we entered into an agreement with Champs in order to make these cards available to our customers."

The first series of American Vintage Cycles Trading Cards, which Champs distributed directly, sold out quickly at the wholesale level, and has met with an enthusiastic response at retail from motorcycle and card enthusiasts alike.

The 100-card second series will feature all new, custom photography shot exclusively for this card line, including familiar brand cycles such as Harley Davidson and Indian, one-of-a-kind vintage motorcycles, celebrity cycles, and track cycles. Card backs feature full color detail photos and unique information about each motorcycle and the manufacturing process utilized to produce it.

Five limited edition bonus cards will be randomly packed in ten-card packs of *American Vintage Cycles Series II* trading cards. Three of the bonus cards will feature sports stars on motorcycles. In addition, one bonus card will be redeemable for an uncut press sheet of the 100-card series, and one will enable the bearer to enter a year-end drawing for a 1994 Harley Davidson Motorcycle.

The *Champs American Vintage Cycles Series II* trading cards will be released by SkyBox to retail in late June. The cards will be shipped to retail in ten-box cases, 36-packs to a box. The ten-card packs will carry a suggested retail price of 99¢ each.



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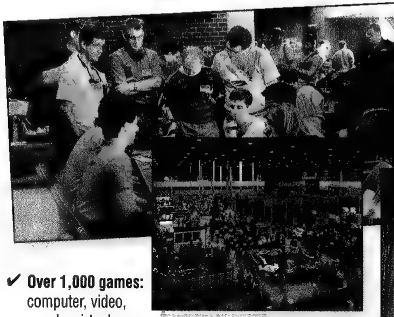

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ARENA MAGAZINE FAN ART

Here it is! Our first of hopefully many *Arena Magazine* Fan Art sections! Do you want to see your work in print? Send it in! We'll print the sucker free of charge!

Where do I send it you ask? Send it to: **Arena Magazine Fan Art, 264 Main Street, Florence, KY 41042**. Send letter-sized copies, not originals or you probably won't get it back (Bob might like it so much he'll keep it).

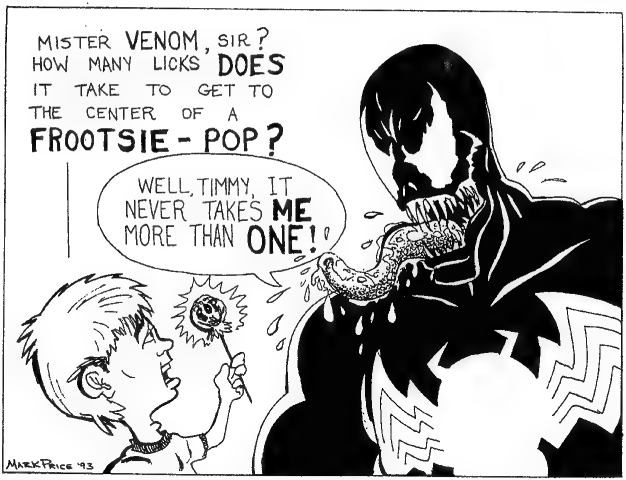
What should I draw you ask? Anything! Draw Image guys, Marvel guys, DC guys, your own guys. It just doesn't matter, as long as you draw something (and no Iceman versus Wendigo in a snowstorm, ya' wiseguy)!

What's in it for me you ask? Greedy little guy, aren't ya? Without further adieu, let's hit it! And remember, if it isn't a good read, it's not Arena.

Buddy Sowders, 21
San Antonio, TX

Chris Riley, 18
Florence, KY

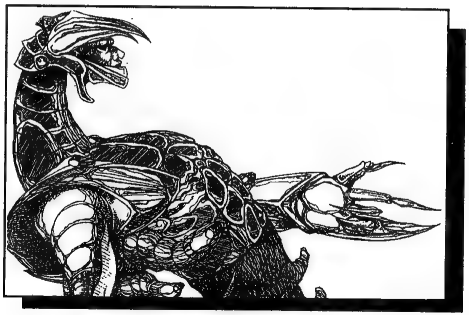
David Barnes, 19
Hebron, KY


MISTER VENOM, SIR? HOW MANY LICKS DOES IT TAKE TO GET TO THE CENTER OF A FROOTSIE-POP?
WELL, TIMMY, IT NEVER TAKES ME MORE THAN ONE!
MARK PRICE '93

TO MAKE ENDS MEET BETWEEN BOOK APPEARANCES, EDDIE BROCK ALSO DOES A FEW COMMERCIALS...

Mark Price, 20
Fairfield, OH

David Barnes, 19
Hebron, KY



Scott's Blazing Top Ten

Top Ten Worst Batman Inventions

10. Solar powered night vision goggles.

9. Razor sharp Batarang.

8. Magnetic body armor.

7. Fireproof fingerless gloves.

6. Clown repellent.

5. Glow in the dark cape.

4. The hot air Bat Balloon.

3. The guilt-o-meter.

2. Utility belt Michelob dispenser.

1. Computerized teletex on glove to recite dark hero banter.

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Malibu's ULTRAVERSE, Mirage's NEXT COMICS

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